

## **Panther #67 Gives Birth To Unique Litter August 2000**

Panther #67 gave birth to a male and female kitten in early August. Unlike the last den we located (#77's) this one was relatively easy to get to. No long trek through the bush was required; just some driving time. After driving a little more than 1 ½ hours on pavement and 40 minutes through the woods, we were at the doorstep of #67's den. The "biologist-in-a-box" was deployed and two days later we were handling kittens.

The kittens were about 12 days old when handled on 19 August. The male weighed 2 lbs. 4 oz. and had a kink at the end of his tail. The female weighed 2 lbs. 6 oz. and did not have a kinked tail. Transponders were inserted just under the skin in the shoulder blade region and standard biomedical data and samples were collected. This was #67's first den. The suspected sire of these kittens is #81 who we caught this past capture season.

An unique anomaly was observed in these kittens. The fur of both was much lighter in color than normal. At the time, we thought this trait was unique to just one of the kittens. However, after a closer examination it was noted that both had a lighter than normal color.



*"Although both kitten's fur is lighter than normal, the male's fur (on left) is noticeably lighter than his sister's."*

The male kitten, however, was much lighter than his sister. In fact, portions of the male's fur

which are typically dark brown or black (the legs and tail) were practically white. Both kittens were otherwise healthy. We are still researching how commonly this may occur. So far we have only heard of one incident of a similar idiosyncrasy in which a cougar had a white tail. With luck these kittens will survive to adulthood and hopefully we'll have an opportunity to catch them. If so, it will be interesting to monitor their development to see if their adult pelage varies from the norm and if it is a trait passed on to future generations.



***“This neonate’s fur is unusually light colored. This is the first time a trait like this has been documented in a Florida panther.”***