

Panther #76 Killed by Panther #54 November 1999

Male panther #76 was found dead on 15 November 1999 in the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve (FSSP). Panther #76's mortality signal was detected during the Fish and Wildlife Commission's regularly scheduled telemetry flight. Intraspecific aggression was initially suspected when #54's radio signal was detected in the same location as #76 during the telemetry flight. Our suspicion was confirmed when we arrived on site to retrieve #76's carcass and observed the telltale signs of a panther fight. Panther #76 was found in a large area of flattened ferns with obvious puncture wounds to his skull (see photo). Although #54 was still near the carcass when we arrived, it appeared that #76 had been dead approximately two days. Panther #76 was transported to the University of Florida's Veterinary School for necropsy.

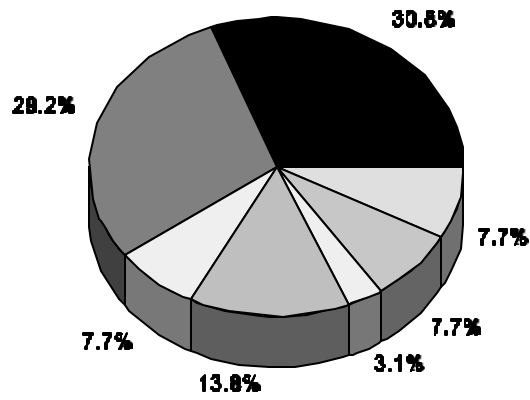
Panther #76 was captured and radiocollared on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) in January 1999 at approximately 22 months of age. Panther #76 was bilaterally cryptorchid (2 undescended testicles); therefore, he was never going to contribute reproductively to the panther population. Following his capture, #76 centered his movements on the southeastern part of FPNWR before crossing State Road 29 (SR 29) and using the southwest portion of Bear Island, Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP). Panther #76 then crossed Interstate 75 south into the Deep Lake Unit of BCNP becoming the first radiocollared panther documented using a wildlife underpass east of SR 29. Although #76 concentrated his activities in the Deep Lake Unit of BCNP, he would make periodic trips across SR 29 west into the FSSP, where he eventually crossed paths with #54.

Panther #54 was first handled as a kitten of Panther #40 in March 1992 and subsequently captured and radiocollared on the Addition Lands of BCNP in February 1993. For the past 5 years, this 7 ½ year-old male's territory has encompassed the FSSP and the southeast portion of the FPNWR.

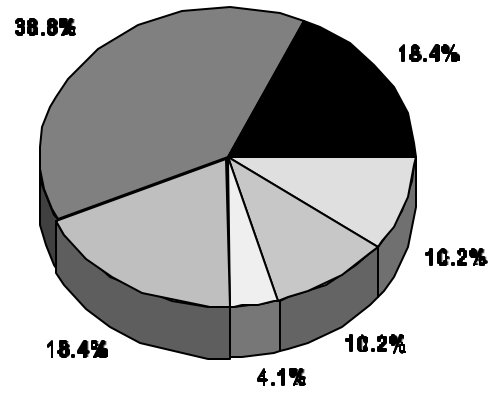
Intraspecific aggression is the leading cause of mortality among radiocollared panthers since 1981 (see chart next page). There has been a popular misconception that vehicular collisions kill most panthers, but this is just the result of sampling bias (i.e., dead, uncollared panthers are easily found if they are next to highways).

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Causes of Mortality for Florida Panthers 1979-1999



All Panthers



Radiocollared Panthers

