

Panther Capture Activities February 21-25, 2000

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's panther capture team focused their activities during the week of February 21-25 on Big Cypress National Preserve. During this time period we captured and radio collared an eight month-old female kitten of #71_{F1} and changed a malfunctioning radio collar on 83_{F1}.

Monday, February 21st - On Monday we made our first attempt at capturing and radio collaring the offspring of panthers that produced kittens on Big Cypress National Preserve during the past year. We first targeted the offspring of Panther #71_{F1}, who were born in late June 1999 (**see 06/09 Field Note**). Through aerial observations and ground surveys we had determined that three out of four kittens were surviving from the original litter. We located the family group in a small hammock where they had come to rest for the day. Roy and his dogs were successful in treeing one of the kittens approximately 25 feet up an oak tree. We safely immobilized the eight month-old female kitten, fitted her with a radio collar, and collected our standard biomedical samples. Panther #86_{F2}, as she is now known, weighed 36 pounds, appeared healthy, and did not have a kinked tail or a cowlick.

Tuesday, February 22nd - On Tuesday we began our search for #70_{F1} and her kittens. Unfortunately, #70_{F1}'s radio collar had failed prematurely last year which made our hunt comparable to hunting for an uncollared panther. We were fortunate to find sign of an adult female panther traveling with three kittens along Concho Billy Trail. Because this area was part of #70_{F1}'s home range prior to her radio collar failing, we strongly felt like we were on the right track. However, the tracks were not fresh enough for the dogs to trail. Even though we could not trail the family group, the discovery of their sign confirmed that we were hunting in the right place and provided clues on where we might catch up to them in the coming weeks.

Wednesday-Friday, February 23-25th - We spent the remainder of the week surveying for fresh sign of #70_{F1}'s family group. Additionally, we replaced the radio collar on 83_{F1}, the female kitten of TX106 captured on February 8th. The signal from this radio collar weakened significantly in the days subsequent to her capture 16 days ago and we did not want to risk losing radio contact.

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