

Florida Panther Capture Season Update December 7, 2000 - January 2001

We were on hiatus throughout most of December due to meetings and the holidays. Capture activities picked up again in January however. Shortly after noon on December 29th a 5- year old female panther was struck by a vehicle and killed on County Road 846 about 4.5 miles East of Immokalee. In January we recollared 2 panthers, captured and collared 5 new panthers, one Texas cat died of undetermined causes, and 3 neonate kittens were handled at the den.

Recollars

#92_{F2} - Jan. 12. Male panther #92_{F2} was scheduled for a routine collar change this season. A few days before his capture another male panther, #59, was very close to #92_{F2}. After being located in the same Brazilian Pepper hedge for a few days in the southwest corner of the I-75/State Road 29 intersection, we began to suspect the two may have had a little "discussion." It was possible that #92_{F2} was considering what #59 had to say about his territory. Since it's unusual for a male to stay in the same spot for more than a couple of days we decided to flush him out of the pepper and assess his condition. Luckily for us #92_{F2} was located on a "peninsula" between some borrow pits. There was only one way out. We posted Dr. Cunningham as a lookout. He observed #92_{F2} vacate the pepper and determined that he was in satisfactory condition for capture. Once the panther was on the ground we observed several lacerations, punctures, and the presence of a fever. The wounds were thoroughly flushed and he was given antibiotics to combat infection. He quickly resumed normal movements.

#90_{F2} - Jan. 15. We caught up to the dispersing #90_{F2} on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. His collar was changed without incident.

New Panthers

#96 - Jan. 7. We placed radio-collars on 5 new panthers in January. The first was #96, a 9-month old male kitten of #78. While Roy McBride was exercising his dogs on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) a young panther was treed. He called us at home (it was a Sunday) explaining the situation and we promptly drove out to the site. Number 96's mother, #78, remained nearby throughout the ordeal. On the flight the following morning the 2 were reunited.

#97 - Jan. 19. A panther family group had previously been captured on film by a remote camera set up by Larry Richardson, the FPNWR biologist. The mother was not collared. On the 19th we found ourselves amidst this family. The dogs chased several panthers before treeing a male kitten about 35 feet high in a cypress tree. Number 97 was lowered to the ground and estimated to be about 11 months old.

#98 - Jan. 25. It was very windy this Thursday in the Bear Island Unit of Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP). This condition makes it difficult for



the dogs to hear each other and subsequently stay together. Eventually the pack had split up and began working in two different directions. Roy caught up with half of the dogs while we (myself, Dave, and Mark) saw what the others were up to. We got close to them but couldn't make them come to us. Because of the strength and direction of the wind we were unable to detect any barking either. We drove up to the hammock where the dogs were and found a panther in a tree. We radioed this information to Roy and he soon joined us. Number 98 is a 3- year old,

130 pound male with all the "typical" panther traits; cryptorchid (one descended testicle), kinked tail, and cowlick.

#99 - Jan. 26. We returned to the FPNWR across the road from Bear Island. We were gathering at the buggies before sunrise as we usually do and the dogs were busy doing their "duty" before getting started for the day. Near where the buggies were parked they picked up their favorite scent – panther. Our day hadn't even begun before a panther was treed. While Roy grabbed a flashlight to see what the dogs had treed we pulled out our telemetry gear to see if any collared panthers were in the area. It wasn't long before we realized the "family group" was in the area. The panther in the tree was not #97, but one of his siblings. Male number 99 was lowered by rope from about 25 feet high in a maple tree.

#100 - Jan. 31. Having caught panthers on FPNWR and in Bear Island, we moved our operation a little farther east to give those areas a break. We were now in the "Addition Lands" of BCNP. The dogs picked up the scent of an uncollared male panther and took off. It was all we could do to keep up with the signals emanating from the dogs collars. It was early in the morning and the scent was very strong. The panther had moved through just a few hours earlier. We finally caught up to the 154 pound cat, estimated to be about 4 years old, in an oak hammock about 3.5 miles from where we started. Number 100 appears to be the dominate male in the area as evidenced by the numerous battle wounds on his head. He obviously had been in more than one dispute. It's been a long journey to



reach the 100th panther. Hopefully the knowledge gained in 20 years of panther research can be effectively utilized and applied for the perpetuation of the species.

Deaths

TX107 - Jan. 18. TX 107's collar was detected in the mortality mode during a routine telemetry flight. Her body was retrieved in short order and in relatively good condition. Despite the freshness of the carcass a cause of death could not be determined. TX 107 successfully raised 2 litters of kittens. Two female kittens from her first litter in May of 1997, Florida panthers #70_{F1} and #71_{F1}, were recruited into the population. A second litter of 1 male and 2 females were born in February 1999. Of these, one female, #93_{B-TX}, was collared. The male kitten was around when #93_{B-TX} was collared but no sign of the other female was observed. Since TX107 had met her "reproductive requirements" for genetic restoration, she was implanted with a subcutaneous contraceptive device last capture season.

Births

#82 - Jan. 3. Three 2-week old kittens were handled at the den of panther #82 on Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest. Two females and one male ranged in weight from 2 pounds, 5 ounces to 3 pounds, 7 ounces. This was a fairly unique den site because it was in the middle of a saw grass marsh. The marsh was dry, of course, and the 6-7 foot high saw grass was dense and provided more than adequate cover. Our first attempt to find the den site was foiled because, although we had pinpointed #82's location by her radio signal, she was not at the den at that time. A couple of more trips were required before we finally had success.

