

## Florida Panther Capture Season Update

March 2001

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Most of this month was devoted to working on Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) with the exception of one capture in Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve (FSSP) and a den on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR). We recollared three panthers, caught one new panther, and handled two neonates at a den.

### Recollars

**#88<sub>F2</sub>** (female) - March 1. We were fortunate to be able to take advantage of this cat's position on Loop Road in BCNP. Typically she spends most of her time many miles away. In fact, she likely was walking on the road as we approached early in the morning. No off a road excursions were required this day. Consequently she was treed very quickly and we were done in short order.



Rocky McBride, Roy's son (far right), helps out on the capture of #88<sub>F2</sub>.

**#83<sub>F1</sub>** (female) - March 7. Number 83<sub>F1</sub> was in an accessible location on this day so after a very full day of hunting in Big Cypress we headed over to Fakahatchee Strand for a late afternoon capture. We made our way to her location and set the dogs out. She jumped and retreated a few times before finally being darted. It was just after sunset when we finished. While hiking back to the buggies a five- to six-month-old kitten was spotted in a small oak tree near where #83<sub>F1</sub> had been resting. This was a surprise since we hadn't noted any distinct denning behavior by #83<sub>F1</sub>. There have been panthers in the past that exhibited "squirrelly" denning behavior making it difficult to identify when a denning event occurs. It looks like #83<sub>F1</sub> may be another one.

**#91<sub>F2</sub>** (female) - March 21. We attempted to change #91<sub>F2</sub>'s collar a few weeks ago in Big Cypress but were never able to catch up to her. We got a location from the plane, as usual, but she was rapidly on the move throughout the day. She was on the move again this day. However, our approach this time would intersect her direction of travel rather than trying to play "catch up." A couple of educated guesses here, a lucky turn through the woods there, and a few hours later we were in position to capture #91<sub>F2</sub>. We replaced the kitten collar she was wearing with an adult-sized collar.



#91<sub>F2</sub> rouses from anesthesia after her collar is replaced.

### **New Panthers**

**#103** (female) - March 13. This is a 10-month-old kitten of panther #102. We captured #102 just three weeks ago on February 20 in Big Cypress. We had not intended to catch any of #102's kittens at this stage. However, the dogs crossed this family group's trail while we were hunting for other panthers. We took advantage of the situation and collared one of the kittens that had treed. Besides #102 and the soon to be #103, another kitten was also treed. The day ended on a sad note, however, because one of the dogs was killed by an alligator after the capture was complete.

### **Births**

**TX106** - March 17 (St. Patrick's Day). The "biologist-in-a-box" was set up at TX 106's den on the 14<sup>th</sup> on the FPNWR. A few days later she left during the midmorning hours. After a few minutes of searching through the dense palmettos the den was found. But not until David, a.k.a. "St. Patrick," chased the snakes away. He actually had a close encounter with a cottonmouth that struck at him. Luckily it didn't make contact and moved on. Two, two-week-old kittens were found in the den. Both were healthy. The male weighed 3 pounds 1 ounce and the female weighed 2 pound 11 ounces. As standard operating procedure, transponders were inserted and biological samples were taken for genetic analysis.



TX106's kittens resume resting after their first encounter with humans.

