

Florida Panther Capture Season Update

April 2001

Prepared by Mark Lot

The capture season for 2000/01 came to a close this month. However, we do have one item to wrap up later in the year. Panther #87_{B-FL} needs to have her collar changed. Since she gave birth at the end of January, we will wait until such time that the safety of the kittens is not jeopardized. Three new panthers were collared and two died of vehicle collisions.

New Panthers

#104 (male)- April 2. An unfortunate incident occurred for a second time this season. While performing a routine capture on Big Cypress National Preserve the front right leg of a young panther was discovered to be broken. As with the first case, it is a mystery as to how or when this event occurred. There were few risk factors involved with this capture. The cat was low in a tree with no obstructions below. The only uncontrolled event that occurred was when the panther jumped from the tree before we had a chance to dart it. However, cats being the agile creatures they are, one would not expect a leg to break from this minor action. Regardless of how the incident occurred, we had to remedy the situation. The leg was stabilized and the panther removed from the wild and taken to the vet school at The University of Florida. After a successful surgery to pin the bone together #104 was taken to the Lowry Park Zoo to recover. We anticipate that after a few weeks he will be transferred to another facility for further maturation and conditioning.

#104 was six to seven months old and weighed 48 pounds at the time of capture. His mother is either #70_{F1} (who we have been looking for to replace her failed radio collar) or an uncollared panther. No group of people feel worse than those on the capture team, however #104's prognosis and likelihood to be returned to the wild are excellent. Panthers in this age range have been raised in captivity for various reasons in the past. They fared well after their release and made viable contributions to the continuation of their species in the form of offspring.

#105 (female) **#106** (female) - April 12. Back in January, we caught a pair of 10-month-old male kittens on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge; #97 on the 19th, #99 on the 26th. We were interested in determining the mother of these kittens. We each had our own theory and returned to the refuge with aspirations of finding out who was right. The mother was successfully treed but jumped after she was darted. While tracking her down we passed by the remaining female kitten in a tree. The dogs had the mother bayed on the ground and the situation was quickly under control. This mother, #105, did not have a transponder. This meant she had never been handled before and all of our theories were incorrect. She was about six years old and weighed in at 90 pounds. She was in good shape considering she was raising three large kittens.

Since the female kitten was so close, we decided to capture her as well. She was treed in a cabbage palm and caught in the net. We took #106 to where we worked up her mother. This kitten was now 13 months old and weighed 68 pounds. She had a full belly,

as did her mother, indicating that the family had a kill near by. The flight the following day revealed all four panthers, #105, #106, #97, and #99, were together.



While the mother of three, #105 (foreground) rests comfortably, work continues on her daughter #106.

Deaths

Uncollared female - April 14. A two-year-old female was witnessed colliding with a vehicle at 8:15 a.m. on County Road 833 in Henry County about one mile north of the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. A small cowlick was present on the nape of the neck. She did not have a transponder.

#90_{F2} (male) April 26. This panther was hit and killed by a vehicle on US 27 in Palm Beach County approximately 2.5 miles north of the Palm Beach/Broward County line. He was in excellent health at the time of his death. We changed his collar earlier this season on January 15. He was born to #71_{F1_} and #79_{F1_} in June 1999. He had dispersed north and east from his natal range and was most currently using the Holy Land Wildlife Management Area and Water Conservation Area Number 3.