

Panther #63 Killed on State Road 29 17 January 2000

Panther #63 was found dead along State Road 29 (SR29) south of Sunniland on 17 January 2000. Panther #63's mortality signal was detected during the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) routine telemetry flight. Panther #63's location was radioed to the FWC's panther capture team who was conducting panther captures a few miles away on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. The carcass was found floating in a canal that runs parallel to SR29. Upon recovery from the canal, it was discovered that #63 had injuries attributable to separate factors that could have contributed to his death. Number 63 had puncture wounds on his forelegs that were consistent with bite wounds from another panther. Additionally, #63 had injuries consistent with being hit by a vehicle.

Panther #63 was transported to the University of Florida's Veterinary School for necropsy where it was determined that although he sustained vehicular trauma and injuries from intraspecific aggression, the ultimate cause of death was drowning. It appears that although #63's injuries were serious, they would not have been life-threatening had he not entered the canal. After #63 was struck by the vehicle, he either entered the canal with the intentions to swim across or due to disorientation associated with head trauma. However, #63's injuries prevented him from successfully traversing the short distance across the canal and he drowned.

Panther #63 was first captured and radiocollared as a 2 year-old in April 1997 on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation (BCSIR). Subsequent to his capture in 1997, #63 primarily utilized areas of the BCSIR and private lands to the west in Hendry County. However, in Spring 1999 #63 shifted his home range to the Bear Island area of Big Cypress National Preserve and adjacent private lands. Panther #63 was documented to have crossed west of SR29 on only a few occasions. In the few days prior to his death, #63 was located west of SR29 where he may have crossed paths with male panther #59 and received his battle wounds. Panther #63 was scheduled to have his radiocollar changed this capture season, hence the presence of the FWC capture team in the area at the time of his death.

Four panthers (including #51 and a kitten of #11) have been killed and one panther (#64) has been injured on the portion of SR29 where #63 was hit. The Florida Department of Transportation is scheduled to construct two wildlife underpasses on this portion of SR29 in 2003-2004. To date, 10 panthers have been killed on SR29. However, no panthers have been killed or injured along areas of SR29 where wildlife underpasses and fencing have been installed. For more information on underpasses go to the following link: <http://www.panther.state.fl.us/gfc/panther/handbook/natural/life.html>

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