

Panther #69 Gives Birth to First Litter August 1999

On Sunday August 1st we handled three healthy kittens at panther #69's den on the Addition Lands, Big Cypress National Preserve. She had one male and two females. They were only 7-8 days old when we handled them. The male's eyes had not opened yet but both of the female kittens' eyes were open. We inserted transponders and collected skin biopsies. The father of these kittens was an uncollared male.



Panther #69 had a rough beginning to her life. She was born in May 1997. In February 1998 (when she was only nine months old) her mother, #40, died from an infection resulting from wounds caused by another panther. Prior to #40's death, our only knowledge of #40's kitten was from our visit to her den nine months earlier.

Suspecting that the kitten was still alive, we directed capture efforts to the area where we recovered #40's remains. On 5 February, these efforts were rewarded with the capture of a thin dehydrated kitten - #69. She was removed from the wild and taken to the White Oak Conservation Center to be raised and conditioned for release back into the wild. Panther #69 spent six months at the Center until she became proficient at killing prey. She was released on August 18, 1998, (she was now 15 months old) near where she was born. She eventually set up a territory near where her mother had ranged. And now, one year after her release she has given birth to her first litter. It is encouraging that our efforts, and specifically the efforts of the staff at White Oak Conservation Center, have led to the recruitment of another breeder into the small panther population.

Prepared by Mark Lotz, Darrell Land, and David Shindle