

Texas Cougar 103 Dies August 1999

Texas cougar 103 was found dead after a mortality signal was detected during a routine telemetry flight on Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) on 20 August 1999. No obvious cause of death could be determined from the field as no signs of trauma or foul-play were observed. TX 103's carcass was collected and transported to the University of Florida's Veterinary School where a necropsy was performed to identify the likely cause of death. The necropsy revealed that TX 103 was carrying four male fetuses that were approximately two weeks shy of full development. Preliminary analyses seemed to indicate that TX 103 died a natural death from complications associated with this pregnancy. Further samples are still being processed which may reveal more details. It was suspected that TX 103 might be pregnant because she had been located with male panther #79 approximately three months earlier.

TX 103 was released on 4 May 1995 in BCNP south of US 41 as part of the genetic restoration project. She is the third Texas cougar to die since the eight females were released in 1995. Previous Texas cougar deaths included TX 102 who was hit by a car on 22 September 1995. TX 102 was carrying 3 half-term fetuses at the time of her death. TX 104, who never successfully bred, was illegally shot on 18 April 1998. Although TX 103's death is disappointing, the remaining five cougars have made significant contributions to the endangered panther population (see TX Cougar Summary Table). To date, these cougars have produced 17 kittens.