



News Release

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Agencies urge Citizens to Celebrate Florida Panther Month

In March, annual events are held by conservation agencies and non-profits to raise awareness about the endangered Florida panther, the official state animal. For 2010, outdoor events span over a month and conservationists have worked with Collier County commissioners to proclaim March as "Save the Florida Panther Month" to learn about the cats' needs and celebrate the growing accomplishments to recover this marvelous cat. Governor Charlie Crist will also celebrate March 20 as "Save the Panther Day" with a state proclamation.

Attracting over 2,000 people last year, **this year's events has grown to include fun, educational activities that engage the public in outdoor activities that show panther survival needs. The month's events are organized by the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and its' Friends Group.** However, conservation groups and agencies participate by hosting various events including panther talks, a Naples Zoo program, swamp walks, bicycling events, a photography field day, and a Panther Refuge Open House.

For a list of events and how to register go to floridapanther.org and look into the current events listings.

The highlight of the month is an open house at Florida Panther Refuge on March 20 where special tours will be conducted and exhibit booths will be hosted by many state and local panther conservation groups. The public is requested to sign up for swamp buggy tours, plant walks, bird hike, and orchid swamp walks. Because space is limited for most activities, call the Refuge office starting March 9 from 8am to 3:30pm at 353-8442, ext. 229 to reserve a spot. While space-limited tours will be made on a first-come, first-served basis, no-reservation activities include talks, exhibits, & trail walks. All activities are free along with hotdogs for lunch.

We get reporters infrequently to our events, so we're making extra efforts to contact you now. Please contact us ASAP if you're able to come support our events with a photographer or writer.

The Panther Refuge Trails are open daily during the daylight hours. From Naples, take I-75 west to Alligator Alley Exit 80. Take the exit for SR 29, North toward Immokalee. The entrance to the public trails is on the left about an eighth of a mile north of the I-75 exit.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas.

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