

Florida Panther Update

Field Stories

Hazards of Living in Suburbia

Story by Mac Hatcher, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) Volunteer

Florida panthers prefer undeveloped rural areas and rarely are seen by people. However, as the panther population has increased and suburban encroachment continues the likelihood of encounters increases. It is now common for Florida panthers to utilize suburban areas of Collier County, particularly in Golden Gate Estates. An Interagency Florida Panther Response Team (Response Team) was established by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), National Park Service (NPS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in 2004 to respond to human-panther interactions. The goal of the team is to manage human-panther interactions while promoting human safety and assuring the continued existence and recovery of the Florida panther.

In late November 2013, FWC staff became aware of a panther in Golden Gate Estates near Vanderbilt Beach Road just west of CR 951. Multiple sightings were reported by residents for about 2 weeks within a small area. The Interagency Florida Panther Response Team evaluated the situation and drafted an Action Plan. Based on available information it was decided that trapping and removing the panther would be in the best interest of the panther. Traps, equipped with monitors to alert biologists when it was triggered, were set in areas where the panther was most consistently observed. Trail cameras were directed at the traps and placed in other known travel areas to monitor the panthers' presence in the area. Defenders of Wildlife canvassed the area with the highest panther use and distributed the "Living with Panther" brochures.

February 2014

Three traps were set in the area the panther was frequenting. Over the next several weeks sighting reports became less frequent and also more widespread. This indicated to the Response Team that this panther was behaving in a manner consistent with a dispersing aged panther and that no intervention was required therefore trapping efforts were suspended. However, several days later the panther returned to the area where it was first sighted. Because of the high-traffic road density and continued presence of the panther in a densely populated residential area of Naples trapping efforts were once again initiated. That evening the panther visited and entered one of the traps but failed to trip the closure mechanism.



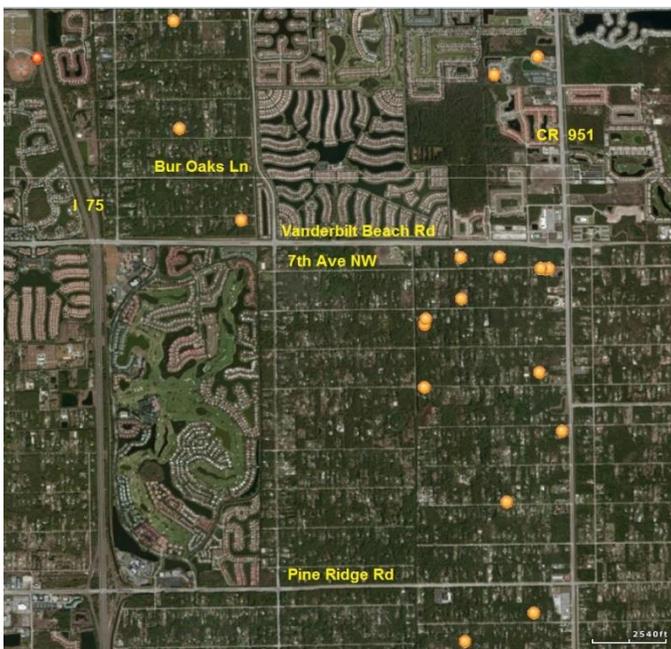
UCFP 203 at a trap. FWC Photo

FWC officers responded to a complaint that a panther killed a Chihuahua on 12/22 at Bur Oaks Ln. Panther tracks were documented at the scene. This is the first confirmed depredation by this panther. The dog owners called local media television stations and a report was aired on at least 3 of the local news outlets as well as the local newspaper.

On 1/2/14, FWC was alerted to a road killed panther on I-75 about a mile south of the Immokalee Rd Exit (Exit 111). This panther, UCFP203, is the same panther that FWC had been attempting to capture and the one that was using the area from Immokalee Rd south to Green Blvd and from CR951 west to I-75. A prominent white tuft of hair on the leading edge of his left ear is diagnostic.

Although he successfully crossed heavily traveled roads several times, he didn't complete the last road crossing. The suburban habitat was only adequate to allow the panther limited cover and crossing multi-lane roads in this fragmented habitat finally caught up with him. Vehicle collisions were the leading cause of known death for panthers in 2013.

Some tips that can make roads safer for Florida panthers and other wildlife are discussed in the brochure "Safe Roads for People and Panthers". The pdf file is available at: www.floridapanther.net.org/images/uploads/safe_roads_FINAL_w-ADA.pdf.



November and December 2013 Florida panther sightings.

Notices and Links

Annual Report on Research and Management of Florida Panthers 2012 - 2013. :

The report highlights information collected during the last fiscal year. Some data collected by partner agencies Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park are included (for complete partner data reports see their individual annual reports). The pdf file is downloadable at:

[www.floridapanther.net.org/images/field_notes/FWC Panther Annual Report 2012 13 Final revised 11sept2013.pdf](http://www.floridapanther.net.org/images/field_notes/FWC_Panther_Annual_Report_2012_13_Final_revised_11sept2013.pdf)

March 1, 2014 Naples Zoo - Save the Florida Panther Day Naples Zoo - Save the Florida Panther Day

Panther biologists, exhibits, and more!! Come learn about Florida panthers on the zoo's free Saturday for Collier County residents!

March 15, 2014, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge Open House

Come join us for a day of fun and educational activities at the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge Open House. The refuge is typically closed to the public, so this is your chance to see what life is like behind our fences. Some activities will require registration. Reservations will be taken starting on March 10th at 10am. To register click here:

www.eventbrite.com/e/florida-panther-nwr-open-house-tickets-10556804687

Agencies Request for Information on Suspicious Panther Death

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are looking for help from the public with an investigation involving the suspected illegal take of a Florida panther that was recently found dead in Big Cypress National Preserve. For information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person responsible for killing the panther, the FWC's Wildlife Alert Reward Association and USFWS are offering a combined reward of up to \$12,000. Anyone who provides information can remain anonymous by calling the FWC at 888-404-3922, texting Tip@MyFWC.com or going online to MyFWC.com/WildlifeAlert.

FWC Panther images and videos:

FWC posts many images and some videos of panthers on their Flickr site.

www.flickr.com/photos/myfwcmedia/sets/72157628704556379/

Florida Panther Update Partnership This newsletter is made possible through the efforts of the following agencies:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) www.floridapanther.net.org

Big Cypress National Preserve (BCNP) www.nps.gov/bicy

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) www.fws.gov/floridapanther



Past Update Issues: <http://www.fws.gov/floridapanther/pantherupdate.html>

Contact us: floridapanther@fws.gov

Updates are Compiled and Distributed by Mac Hatcher, FPNWR Volunteer