



Florida Panther Update

May 2014

Field Stories

Capture of FP231 at Clam Pass

Story by Mark Lotz, Wildlife Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

We received a call shortly after noon on Monday March 24th, 2014 that a panther had been sighted in the mangroves just off the boardwalk at Clam Pass park. A FWC wildlife officer was first to respond and confirmed the presence of a panther. Because the area is highly developed and residential the decision was made to remove the panther for its own safety. The FWC panther biologists (Mark Lotz, Darrell Land, Dave Onorato, Marc Criffield) responded with capture equipment. At first we weren't sure if the panther was injured or what its situation was. It was laying down and was difficult to see from the boardwalk through all the prop roots. Since capturing it was the ultimate goal, we did not want to walk up to it to check it out in case it just got up and ran off. So we first prepared an anesthetizing dart and loaded it into the dart rifle. That way when we walked up to it we would be ready to take a shot if one presented itself. The four of us spread out in a line and slowly approached the panther. It was between us and the bay. When we got to within about 50-60 feet he got up and moved off but because we had him pinned between us and the bay he just settled down again in another thick spot of cover. We noticed that he looked fine and moved normally indicating that he wasn't injured. We were able to sneak in close enough for a shot and darted him. He ran a short distance and temporarily got out of our sight. Luckily, he tried to hide under another section of the boardwalk and a citizen saw his tail poking out from underneath and alerted us to his location. By this time several minutes had passed and the drugs were taking effect. We did a minimal workup under the watchful eyes of dozens of hotel guests and Clam Pass visitors. We attached a radiocollar, inserted a transponder chip for identification, and collected a biopsy sample for genetic analysis. We then placed him in a transport crate and drove to Bird Rookery Swamp, part of the CREW, and released him. Since he was so



FP 231 released after his trip to the beach. Photo ©FWC

recently anesthetized he did not bolt out of the crate like the last few highly publicized releases. He slowly sauntered out and moved under a tree and laid back down where he continued to recover from the ordeal. We drove out to the release site the following morning and discovered he had moved about 1.4 miles to the southeast. The following day he had continued east, crossed CR858, and settled into Winchester Head, some conservation land

east of Everglades Blvd on 39th Ave NE for a few days. From there he made a jaunt up to CR846 before returning to the more central part of Golden Gate Estates near Everglades Blvd and 8th Ave NE. It will be interesting to track this guy to see where he goes. It's possible he is familiar with the Estates and knows exactly where he is. Hopefully his DNA will reveal some secrets about his origins.

FWC Captures This Season

ID	Sex	Date	Age	Comments
FP225	M	1/15/14	1.5 yr	New collar
FP226	F	1/15/14	4-5 yr	New collar
FP216	M	2/6/14	3 yr	Recollar. Collar came off 2/28/14
FP227	M	2/10/14	3 yr	New collar
FP148	F	2/17/14	10 yr	Recollar, Picayune Strand State Forest
FP228	M	2/20/14	4 yr	New collar. Died 3/17/14, vehicle
FP229	F	2/27/14	3-4 yr	New collar
FP231	M	3/24/14	2 yr	New collar. See story

The FWC capture season ran from Dec 4, 2013 - Feb 28, 2014. All captures and recollars took place in the Addition Lands Unit of Big Cypress National Preserve except FP 231.

Big Cypress Panther Capture Season Highlights

Story by Deborah Jansen, Wildlife Biologist, Big Cypress National Preserve

The Big Cypress panther capture team worked only 13 of its planned 30-day hunting season due to the unavailability of all team members. During those 13 days, the team recollared 2 female panthers (FP151 and 161) and collared a new male, FP230, estimated to be 5 years old. All were fitted with satellite collars programmed to provide 3 locations each day. To date, the results have been impressive. When we inspect sites where the panthers remain for a few days, we often find the deer that they have fed on and we can determine both age and gender of the kill. These collars also have the potential to assist us in locating dens, and both females collared will likely den this year. Once this technology is deployed on all monitored panthers, we can track them without the need to locate them by aircraft. We can more efficiently monitor denning panthers and learn more about panther prey needs. In the 8 short weeks since his capture, we have found that FP230 inhabits a 400-square-mile home range.

Florida Panther 163

Panthers killed on roads in south Florida are the greatest cause of known mortality. As of May 16, 2014, 10 of 15 dead panthers reported this year have been killed by vehicles. Nine were panthers whose lives -- their origin, their wanderings -- were unknown. One, however, FP163, was familiar. Big Cypress staff first saw him on March 8, 2007 when he was 16 days old and weighed 3 and a half pounds. He was named K227, the 227th kitten handled by panther researchers. His mom was FP93 and his grandma was Tx107, one of the females from Texas introduced in 1995 to provide new genes for the inbred panthers. His father was FP79, or Don Juan for those who remember his reputation for being the dominant male of Big Cypress.



FP 163 observing Big Cypress staff. Photo ©Ralph Arwood

On February 21, 2008, Big Cypress panther capture team members Ralph Arwood and Dennis Giardina were scouting on all-terrain vehicles along Concho Billie Trail when they rounded a corner and saw 2 young panthers running down the trail and then dashing into the palmettos. One came back out on the trail and sat down for another look. We called the houndsman who was hunting nearby and, about an hour later, we had finished

collaring FP163. Unfortunately, he was able to slip the too loosely fit collar. The State panther researchers collared him again in 2010 in Big Cypress north of I-75. They monitored him for the next three years as he inhabited both Big Cypress and private lands further north. On April 25, FP163 was found dead on County Line Road, the border between Hendry and Collier Counties, 46 kilometers from where he was born. To us, FP163 wasn't just another road-killed panther -- he'll stay in our memory as the little cat sitting on the trail curious about us, teaching us a lesson about collar sizing, and hopefully had carried on his father's prowess.



FP 163 treed during capture. Photo ©Ralph Arwood

Notices and Links

Publications Covering the Panthers in the Above Stories:

March 24, Naples Daily News, "**Panther captured near beach at Clam Pass Park, relocated to preserve**", www.naplesnews.com/news/2014/mar/24/panther-captured-near-beach-clam-pass-park-release/

April 25, Naples Daily News, "**13th panther found dead near Collier, Hendry line**", www.naplesnews.com/news/2014/apr/25/13th-panther-found-dead-near-collierhendry-line/

Other Florida Panther Related Links:

Help refuge managers update management plan, suggestions and comments welcomed through July 2014. [www.fws.gov/refuge/Florida Panther/what we do/revising ccp.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Florida%20Panther/what%20we%20do/revising%20ccp.html)

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission posted the annual report "**Interagency Florida Panther Response Team Annual Report: 2012-2013 (July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013)**."

[http://www.floridapanther.net.org/images/field_notes/Florida Panther Response Team Ann Rpt 2012-2013.pdf](http://www.floridapanther.net.org/images/field_notes/Florida_Panther_Response_Team_Ann_Rpt_2012-2013.pdf)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team will conduct a public forum May 22, 2014, at Archbold Biological Station in Venus, Florida from 10:00 a.m- 4:30 p.m www.fws.gov/verobeach/FloridaPantherRIT.html

March 11, Ft. Myers News Press, "**State, wildlife officials let another cat out of the box**", www.news-press.com/story/tech/science/environment/2014/03/10/state-wildlife-officials-let-another-cat-out-of-the-box/6278367/

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



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