



Panther Update

September, 2007

Big Cat Field Stories

Dying Panther Kitten Gets a Second Chance

by Deb Jansen (Big Cypress National Preserve)

In July, Big Cypress biologists found four kittens, with one of the females, weighing less than 2 pounds, in very poor condition. (see August Update)*. Knowing the kitten would most likely die, they sure wished they could have stuck her in their pocket and taken her home. FP150, the Mom, returned to the saw palmetto thicket den about 14 hours after the biologists had gone and chose not to move the kittens from the area. Two weeks later, the biologists returned to change the battery in the den monitoring box and take another peek at the den.

What a surprise to find that same poor little kitten...or *was it her?* They scanned her back for the unique numbers of the transponder chip, which had been previously slipped under the skin of each kitten. It wasn't that original smallest kitten after all, but the *healthiest* of the females handled on July 20! It was K255 and she had lost 40% of her body weight, was lethargic, wounded, and alone.



K255(Lucy), Near Death at the Den August 3, 2007, by Ralph Arwood



Dr. Lanier with Lucy that Afternoon, by Ralph Arwood



Lucy Recovering at the Lowry Park Zoo, by Keeper, Angie Jones

After consultation via cellphone with Dr. Mark Cunningham, FWC's veterinarian, the NPS biologists did slip this ailing kitten into their "pocket" and took her "home". She was transported to Dr. John Lanier, of Golden Gate Animal Clinic in Golden Gate City, FL. Dr. Lanier, no stranger to panthers, has helped the capture teams for many years. He gave fluids and antibiotics to the kitten, stitched up an open wound on her head, and monitored her carefully over the weekend. A few days later, kitten #255 got a plane ride to the Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, thanks to pilot Ralph Arwood.

Now, a month after leaving Big Cypress, she is growing and getting "feisty", according to her keepers there, who named her Calusa and call her "Lucy" for short. Given the extent of human care she needs, she may become too used to people to be returned to the wild.

This panther kitten is not the first to be removed from the wild, but raises the question of when one intervenes and when one "lets nature takes its course". Panther experts are now preparing a protocol for such situations.

Visitors Find Sleeping Panther on Gumbo Limbo Trail



Photo by Mario A. Alvarado (Everglades National Park)
(Note the dangling hind paw...)

Visitors Find Sleeping Panther(continued)

A few lucky visitors on the Gumbo Limbo Trail of Everglades National Park, July 30, 2007, were privileged with this sight before park personnel closed the trail so as not to disturb the panther. The panther is believed to be the juvenile offspring of FP95. Apparently the first visitor to spot it noticed a bird egg on the ground and looked up for the nest!

FP110 Gives Birth to Second Litter in Five Months

On August 10, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission biologists handled two male kittens at Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest. They were 2 weeks old (13-15 days) and weighed 2.3 and 2.6 pounds each. FP110, their Mom, had previously given birth to 4 kittens on March 20(see the April Update)* but obviously lost those kittens. It is believed that the uncollared male observed with her on April 16 is the father(he's the one Mark Lotz met on the trail and photographed from 20 feet away, see the June Update)*.



FP110's Male Offspring by Mark Lotz

Are Mosquitoes Harmful to Florida Panther Kittens?

By Mark Lotz (FWC)



FP110 Kitten with Mosquito by Mark Lotz

Kitten fur is almost fleece-like. Mosquitoes do not seem to be able to penetrate their fur but, do get in around the eyes, nose, base of the ears, and between the toes. When there are a lot of mosquitoes they most definitely irritate the kittens. Kittens will assume a "defensive" posture in the den whereby they lay flat on their belly and bury their head between their front legs trying to protect their face and ears. Mosquitoes can cause harm to kittens. FP107's very first litter died because they were born during a time of very high mosquito concentrations. They became severely anemic because the mosquitoes had essentially sucked them dry. Mosquitoes can actually bite through the fur of an adult panther much easier because it's a lot thinner, almost Doberman Pincer-like. I've noticed during captures, while the panther is anesthetized, that mosquitoes will land wherever they please and start the extraction process.

*Panther Update archives can be found on FFPR Website listed below.

What Humans Are Doing

The 75th Duck Stamp Competition Will be Held in Conjunction with Ding Darling Days Beginning September 24th. Click here for their schedule of events: <http://dingdarlingdays.com/scheduleofevents.html>. The contest is being held in conjunction with National Wildlife Refuge Week and the annual "Ding" Darling Days festival October 8-14 at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Sanibel, Florida. Weeklong activities include: Free birding tours, Refuge tram tours, live wildlife shows, kayaking, an Ivory-billed Woodpecker presentation by researchers Bobby Harrison and Dr. Jerry Jackson, and Family Fun Day on Sunday, October 14.

New Children's Book Published. It is part of a series called America's Animal Comebacks, entitled "Florida Panthers, Struggle For Survival" by William Caper. This book can be purchased on <http://www.bearportpublishing.com/productdetails.cfm?PC=309>

What You Can Do This Month

Love Ralph Arwood's Photography? Now you can purchase products featuring his work on http://www.printroom.com/ghome.asp?domain_name=puma. All profits go toward Florida Panther research at Big Cypress National Preserve. It's a win/win situation! Watch for a series of panther related articles to be published in the Naples Daily News this month which will include Ralph's photos.

Special Thanks To:

Layne Hamilton, [Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands NWR](#)
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