

FLORIDA PANTHER

Update

October 2015



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Human - Panther Interactions

Story by Mac Hatcher, Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge Board Member

Florida Panthers in the Suburbs

Florida panthers are secretive and encounters with humans are rare. As secretive as panthers are, occasionally someone gets a good look at a Florida panther. Haley Price only had to look out on her porch in Golden Gate Estates last month and has a nice picture and a good story to boot (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Panther on a back porch in Golden Gate Estates

Since 2002, there has been an increase in human - panther interactions in south Florida, including instances of depredation (killing) of livestock/pets. As human - panther interactions became more frequent, federal and state wildlife agencies developed a Panther Response Plan to guide the three main agencies; Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), National Park Service (NPS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), in dealing with several types of interactions including; sightings, encounters, incidents, threats, attacks, and depredations.

Not all experiences however, like the Price's sighting are positive. In August 2014, following several depredations, the FWC recommended residents in Golden Gate Estates protect small livestock from panthers by keeping them in predator resistant structures. Depredation has become the most frequently reported type of interaction. In the most recent draft report from the Florida Panther Interagency Response Team (2014 - 2015), depredation of livestock and pets, is by far the most common interaction reported (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of human-panther interactions and depredations investigated during fiscal year 1 July 2014-30 June 2015. Verified/unverified relates to confirmation of the presence of a panther.

Interaction Class	Verified	Unverified	Other	Total
Depredation	27	9	5	41
Sighting	0	1	0	1
Encounter	3	0	0	3
Incident	0	0	0	0
Threat	0	0	0	0
Attack	0	0	0	0
Total	0	30	10	5

a. Other depredations were caused by bobcat (2), coyote (2) and domestic dog (1).

Many of the recent depredations occurred in rural Golden Gate Estates (14 of 27) or other rural subdivisions of mostly 1 to 5 acre lots in Collier County (Figure 1). These subdivisions were developed with minimal infrastructure, roads and drainage were built, but the vegetation was not cleared, so wildlife continues to utilize sparsely developed areas. Some agricultural uses are allowed in these subdivisions. Many of the residents have small livestock like chickens, sheep, and goats. For panthers that explore into these rural areas from adjacent conservation lands, the wildlife, unsecured livestock, and pets are potential prey.

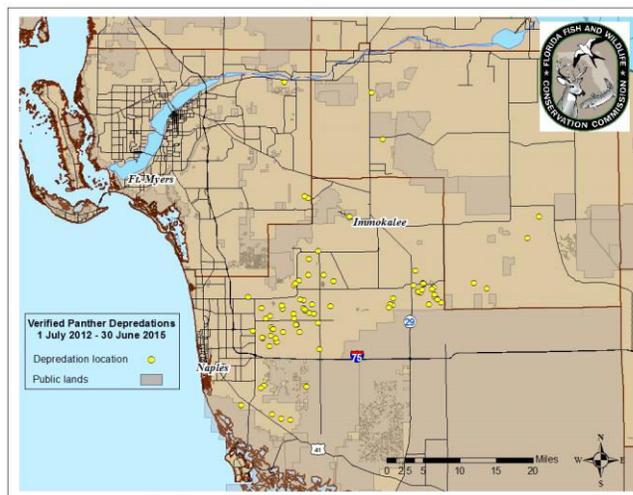


Figure 2. Panther depredations 2012 – 2015. FWC

FWC recommends that residents move pets and livestock to secure areas (fenced with a roof) from dusk until dawn when panthers are most active. This will protect these animals from panthers and other predators (bobcats and coyotes). Model enclosures were constructed at the UF/IFAS Collier County Extension office and several community workshops have been conducted in recent years. There will be another "How to Prevent Wildlife Conflicts" community workshop November 21, 2015 at the UF/IFAS Collier County Extension office. Additionally the Conservancy of Southwest Florida and Defenders of Wildlife have programs to assist with building animal safety pens. More details on what each program offers can be found in the links section.

Home Range Hunting

Travels of a young male panther FP 238

Young males dispersing out of their mother's home range often try to establish a home range in marginal habitat (the prime areas are defended by adult males). FP 238, a young male, captured in the Port Royal subdivision in February 2015 (Panther Update March 2015), has spent most of his time west and south of US 41 since his capture. He was released in Picayune Strand State Forest and headed south, and crossed US 41 within days. He spent a lot of time in Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Then he traveled southeast, between US 41 and the mangrove forest, through Collier Seminole State Park and Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. He then spent some time in the area between Everglades City and Jerome on SR 29. Lately, he is back utilizing the edge of the mangrove forest, heading south into Everglades National Park to Lostmans River. Primary panther habitat is mostly above US 41. His travels illustrate the value of native habitats, not included in the identified panther habitat zones, especially to young maturing panthers. Unfortunately his collar failed in early October and biologists are no longer able to track him.



Figure 3. FP 238 Telemetry locations since capture 2/15. FWC

Literature Cited:

FWC, NPS, FWS. "Draft Interagency Florida Panther Response Team Annual Report: 2014-2015"

Conservancy of Southwest Florida. "Florida Panther Pilot Compensation Program".

www.conservancy.org/panther-pilot-program

Defenders of Wildlife. "Helping People Coexist With Panthers". www.defenders.org/florida-panther/helping-people-coexist-panthers

Notices and Links:

FWC. "Annual Report on the Research and Management of Florida Panthers: 2014-2015".

www.floridapanther.net.org/index.php/news/item/2395/#.Vhv_n-i6dpg

FWS, FWC, NPS, UF / IFAS, and other NGOs. "How to Prevent Wildlife Conflicts Community Workshop". Saturday November 21, 2015 UF/IFAS Collier County Extension Office, 14700 Immokalee Road, Naples, FL 34120

Two Sessions: 10 am to noon and 1 pm to 3 pm www.floridapanther.net.org/index.php/notes/entry/2399/#.ViUmSJrntpg

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

Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge (FFPR)

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Updates are Compiled and Distributed by Mac Hatcher,
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