



FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION



QUINTON L. HEDGEPEETH, DDS MRS. GILBERT W. HUMPHREY THOMAS B. KIBLER JAMES L. "JAMIE" ADAMS JR. JULIE K. MORRIS
Miami Miccosukee Lakeland Bushnell Sarasota

ALLAN L. EGBERT, Ph.D., Executive Director
VICTOR J. HELLER, Assistant Executive Director

NAPLES OFFICE
566 Commercial Blvd.
Naples, Florida 34104-4709

20 May 1998

To Panther Capture Season Planning Participants:

Greetings to one and all. Attached is the Reader's Digest condensed version of the events of this past capture season. We had a very successful year in spite of an extremely wet winter. Many thanks are extended to all of our cooperators - much of this work would have been more difficult to complete without your support.

Looking ahead to the 1998-99 capture season, we will be reaping the benefits of the switch to recollaring panthers every 3 years. Our re-capture load will be reduced to a third of our normal recollarings, thereby freeing up more time to hunt for uncollared cats. Hopefully, we will have weather patterns that will enable us to take full advantage of next season's opportunities.

I look forward to our annual get-together this fall to discuss the upcoming capture season.

Sincerely,

Darrell

Darrell Land

Release

SUMMARY OF 1997-98 CAPTURE SEASON

Our panther capture efforts began in earnest in mid-November and these activities have continued through April 1998. We have handled 19 panthers and cougars this season, 8 of which were captured for the first time. Our current radio-collared sample of panthers stands at 33 individuals (22 panthers, 6 Texas cougars, 5 F1 progeny). Panther #56's radiocollar has malfunctioned.

We met most of capture season goals that we developed in October 1997. Specifically, we re-collared all of our target cats, captured 4 of the 5 dependent-aged F1 progeny (the 5th kitten had dispersed), caught 2 other dependent-aged kittens of Florida panthers, and added 2 new adult males to our radiocollared sample. We captured Florida panther #54 and conducted a reproductive exam; this cat had viable sperm and was determined to be a potential breeder. We also captured TX101 and implanted a contraceptive; to date, the contraceptive appears to have been successful at preventing her from producing more kittens. We are still evaluating TX101's contributions to the panther population.

Our capture efforts were hampered by unusually heavy winter rains that led to higher than normal water levels throughout the region. These high water levels were particularly troublesome in the more southern areas such as Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park. As a result, our effectiveness at hunting for new cats was reduced. In spite of this, we were very successful at catching the 2 F1 progeny of TX107, recollaring #55 and handling her 3 3-week-old kittens, recollaring TX108 and handling her 2 2-week-old kittens.

During the capture season, we handled newborn kittens of 3 different females, #55 and TX108 enumerated above, and TX106's 1 ♂ kitten. This last kitten apparently died at about 1 month-of-age for undetermined reasons. Two Florida panthers and 1 Texas cougar died over the past 5 months. Panther #40 died 12/2/97 on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge as the result of plaque accumulation in a major artery. Panther #40 died 2/1/98 from infected bite wounds in the Bear Island Unit of Big Cypress National Preserve. We spent the week following her death attempting to catch her dependent-aged kitten. This female kitten was caught 2/5/98 and taken to White Oak Plantation to allow further maturation prior to releasing back into the wild. We are anticipating #69's release early in July 1998. TX104 was shot and killed near Belle Meade on 4/18/98.

On 14 January 1998, we treed male panther #51 and discovered a large growth on his flank. We transported the cat to Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa to further evaluate the growth. Test results showed that the growth was related to his on-going fungal infection and the growth was excised. In addition, an infected broken toe was amputated. While recuperating from these procedures, #51 was electro-ejaculated and was found to be a potential breeder. Panther #51 was returned to the wild on 19 February 1998.

Panther #64 was hit by a car on 14 February 1998 along SR 29, north of Bear Island Grade. The following morning, we located and saw the cat resting in a roadside thicket.

After being detected, the young male began to move off to the north and after we followed his movements for over a mile, we decided the cat was not injured severely enough to warrant a capture. We monitored his movements closely over the next 2 weeks and shortly after the collision, the cat began normal movements. Currently, #64 has dispersed some 40 miles away and is using the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed area.

We had to terminate our capture efforts towards uncollared cats in April because of the return of high heat and humidity. Even though water conditions were more favorable, the summerlike temperatures raise the risk at capturing uncollared cats in remote areas to unacceptable levels. The few captures we have left involve areas that are easily accessible, plus we are dealing with cats that we know will be able to handle capture stress; we do not have information on the health and age status of other uncollared cats.

1997-98 Florida panther capture season summary and current status of cats (4/23/98). Gray shading indicates panthers that were captured this capture season.

Panther	last collaring	comments	kittens?	den date
#11♀	1/8/98	last recollaring		
#16♂	3/4/96	recollar 98-99		
#19♀		died 12/2/98		
#23♀	2/12/96	recollar 98-99		
#32♀	2/19/97			
#36♀	3/26/97			
#40♀		died 2/1/98		
#45♂	11/12/97			
#46♂	3/13/96	recollar 98-99		
#48♀	1/9/98			
#49♀	2/4/97		2-?	?
#51♂	12/26/96			
#54♂	2/2/98	sperm OK		
#55♀	3/2/98		2♀, 1♂	2/25/98
#56♀	3/7/97	collar out 2/23/98		
#57♀	1/29/98			
#59♂	3/27/97			
#60♂	1/15/97			
#61 _{FI} ♀	6/23/97			
#62♂	3/25/98			
#63♂	4/13/97			
#64♂	1/23/98	recollar 98-99?		
#65 _{FI} ♂	11/19/97	recollar 98-99		
#66 _{FI} ♀	12/9/97			
#67♀	1/19/98	recollar 98-99		
#68♂	1/23/98			
#69♀	2/5/98	in captivity		
#70 _{FI} ♀	2/25/98	lost collar 2/27/98		
#71 _{FI} ♀	3/5/98			

Panther	last collaring	comments	kittens?	den date
#72♂	4/24/98			
TX101	11/18/97			
TX103	4/11/97			
TX104		died 4/18/98		
TX105	12/1/97			
TX106	12/18/96		1♂	2/17/98 died?
TX107	1/10/97	w/ kittens	#70,#71	
TX108	12/15/97		1♂,1♀	2/11/98