

CRAIG S. JOHNSON, 1971-1994

SCOTT D. SHULL, 1968-1994

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *PARK SCIENCE*, MY M.S. STUDENT, CRAIG Johnson, and I published an article entitled, "Captive Cougars May Aid Florida Panther Project." It is my sad duty to report the tragic deaths of Craig, technician Scott Shull, and pilot Jonathan Saunders while radio-tracking panthers in Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida. Craig, Scott, and Jonathan were collecting radio-telemetry data on Saturday, October 8 when, at about 10:30 a.m., their Cessna 172 went down about 4 miles north of Highway 41 at Big Cypress in an area of pine and cypress trees. All three were killed instantly.

As we explained in our article, the telemetry work was part of a four-year effort to determine the effects of public use at the preserve on the endangered cats. Craig and Scott were flying nearly every day to obtain intensive data on location of the panthers and to collect activity data for those analyses.

The wildlife profession has lost two very bright, promising young men. Craig had graduated cum laude with a B.S. degree in wildlife and fisheries science from Tennessee Tech University. While at Tennessee Tech, he was president of his fraternity, president of the student chapter of The Wildlife Society, and was the recipient of the National Elk Foundation Award. I had advertised nationally for a M.S. candidate and was deluged with applications from all over the world. It was only a coincidence that Craig comes from east Tennessee (Greeneville); he was clearly the most outstanding prospect among all the applicants.

Craig was a quiet, motivated student who got along well with people and who had the ability to acquire and assimilate information at a rapid rate. I was amazed at his ability to tackle complex problems and process the information into simple, comprehensible terms. The work that he was doing with the captive cats in Knoxville was truly innovative and should prove

to be extremely beneficial; it has dispelled many of the myths commonly held concerning tip-switch activity sensors. Craig was a good friend and he will be missed.

I first met Scott Shull in 1989. We had hired him as a technician on a bear project in the Ozark Mountains of western Arkansas. Scott was from Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and had received a B.S. degree from Southwest Missouri State. Scott was an able field technician and demonstrated considerable talent and dedication while trapping, immobilizing, and radio-tracking bears. His efforts paid off and he was offered a M.S. assistantship at the University of Arkansas to look at the effects of mark and release on nuisance bears. During that project, Scott developed an excellent rapport with state game officials, the public, and the academic community alike thanks to his calm demeanor and amiable personality. Scott completed his thesis in 1994. I had hired him for the panther project in August because he was a capable field technician and had accumulated considerable experience with aerial radiotelemetry. Scott was a great person to be with in the field. He was extremely capable, had good *woods sense*, and his wit and humor made the time spent there a real joy.

Scott was a close friend of mine; I will take with me many fond memories of him crawling into bear dens, staying up all night radio-tracking bears, and our many lighthearted discussions.

I take great comfort in knowing that Craig and Scott loved what they were doing and were extremely committed to the work in South Florida. They had made many friends there and, both being mountain boys, were beginning to appreciate the beauty and vulnerability of the South Florida ecosystem. My plans are to continue

our research there; I think that is how Scott and Craig would have wanted it.

Joseph D. Clark
University of Tennessee Field Station
National Biological Survey
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Craig Johnson



Scott Shull (holding black bear)