



Florida Office

233 Third Street North
Suite 201
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727-823-3888
www.defenders.org

National Headquarters

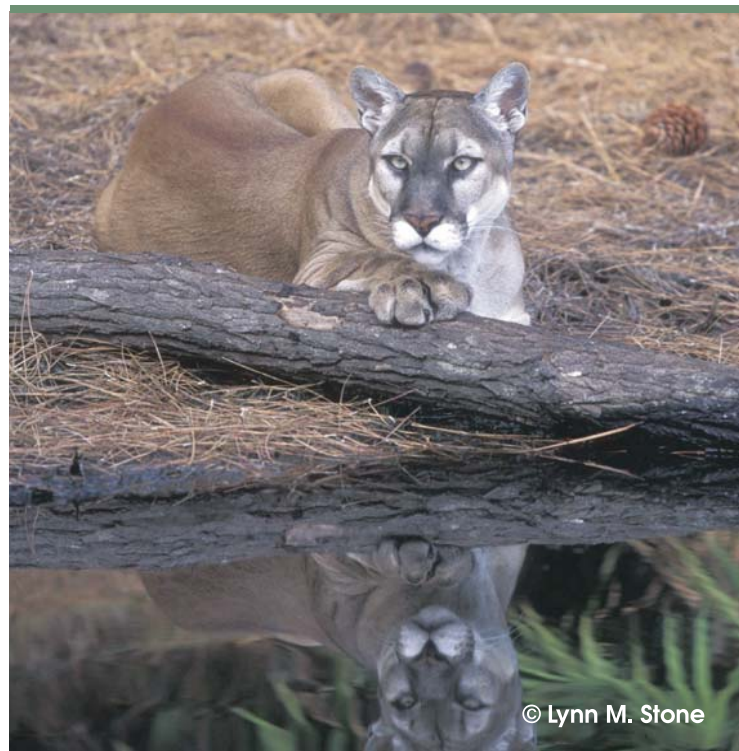
1130 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-682-9400



FLORIDA PANTHER

BIG CAT OF AMERICA'S SOUTHEAST WILD LANDS

FLORIDA PANTHER



© Lynn M. Stone

With fewer than 100 individuals left in the wild, Florida panthers (*Puma concolor coryi*) stand at the brink of extinction. Once ranging across eight southeastern states, the elusive big cats are today found only in the remote forests, prairies and swamps of south Florida.

Pushed into a fraction of their historic range by early settlers and today's unchecked development—which fragments the habitat that remains and increases the possibility of encounters with humans, panthers are forced to cross dangerous highways to find food, shelter and mates.

To save these symbols of vanishing wilderness, Defenders of Wildlife is working to protect large tracts of continuous wildlife habitat in Florida. Defenders is also working with public and private partners and with wildlife agencies to re-establish panthers in their historic range. Protecting and restoring a wide-ranging predator such as the rare and beautiful Florida panther also benefits the plants and animals that share its habitat.

PANTHER BASICS

The Florida panther is a unique subspecies of the big cats found throughout North America and are known by many names - pumas, cougars, mountain lions and catamounts. Florida panthers have tawny brown backs and pale gray undersides. Kittens are born with spots that fade away as they become adults. Males measure nearly seven feet long from nose to the tip of the tail and weigh about 130 pounds. Females are smaller, measuring six feet long and weighing about 70 pounds.

Most active between dusk and dawn, panthers will travel 20 miles or more in search of prey—mostly deer and wild hogs. During the day they rest in the shade of palmetto and cabbage palm thickets.

When young panthers leave their mothers, the females tend to stay nearby often setting up home ranges that average 80 square miles and overlap part of the mother's range. Young males must compete with older, established males for territory and will disperse much farther to establish ranges of approximately 200 square miles of their own. In recent years several male panthers have traveled northward into central Florida.

THREATS TO THE PANTHER

- 🐾 Habitat loss and fragmentation due to unchecked development.
- 🐾 Collisions with vehicles.
- 🐾 **Inbreeding resulting from the small and isolated panther population.**
- 🐾 Diseases, parasites and toxins including feline leukemia and mercury poisoning.
- 🐾 Limited habitat may be leading to an increase of panthers killing panthers.
- 🐾 Public misconceptions about panther behavior and recolonization.



PROTECTING THE PANTHER

With only one known breeding population in rapidly developing south Florida, strong conservation efforts are needed to assure the recovery and long-term viability of the Florida panther.

When the panther was designated an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1967, only about 30 individuals remained in Florida. Today, thanks to extensive research, protection of public lands and efforts to improve the genetic vitality of the panther population, there are more than 80. To ensure the panther's future, the recovery plan developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service calls for re-establishing two additional populations in suitable areas within the cat's historic range. Areas from Arkansas to north Florida with few roads, little development, large public land holdings and an adequate prey base are under consideration.

Defenders of Wildlife is a member of the Florida Panther Recovery Team that is helping to implement the recovery plan for the species and working to protect essential panther habitat and movement corridors. Defenders is also working to prevent conflicts between people and panthers by educating the public about the animal's behavior and by creating incentive programs to encourage property owners to live responsibly with wildlife and, should the need ever arise, to compensate ranchers for livestock taken by panthers.

FLORIDA PANTHER RANGE: PAST & PRESENT





© Sue Morse

LIVING WITH PANTHERS

Solitary, quiet and elusive, panthers prefer to live far from people. But as development continues to encroach on what remains of panther territory, human interactions with panthers are likely to increase. The presence of a panther in an area does not mean there will be a problem. The panther will likely move on—unless it is given easy access to food.

Panthers are rarely seen in the wild. Many animals—bobcats, coyotes and large dogs—are mistaken for Florida panthers. If you do see a panther, stay calm; there are no known incidences of a Florida panther attacking a human. Most likely, the panther will walk away from you. If not, give the animal an escape route and slowly back away from it, making lots of noise.

Reporting Sightings. If you would like information on verifying or reporting panther sightings call Defenders of Wildlife at 727-823-3888. To report an injured or dead panther (such as an animal hit by a vehicle) contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-3922; cell phones can use *FWC or #FWC.

IF YOU LIVE IN PANTHER COUNTRY...

- Do not feed wildlife! Do not put out food that attracts deer and other potential panther prey.
- Make sure that food for pets, livestock and birds is accessible only to those animals.
- If you feed your pets outside, bring in food and food bowls when your pets are done eating.
- Do not allow pets to roam, they can be prey for a sick or injured panther, so keep them under control in a fenced area or indoors.
- Fence in fruit and vegetable gardens that might attract wildlife.
- Landscape with plants deer will not eat and that are low enough to make it difficult for a panther to approach unseen.
- Keep livestock in fenced areas or secure enclosures such as barns, pens or sheds.
- Install deterrent devices, such as sensor lighting.
- Store garbage securely until pick-up day. Garbage left outside attracts raccoons and other panther prey.

Additional information available at www.defenders.org.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join Defenders of Wildlife. Fill out and return the attached form.

Become a Defenders eActivist. Get action alerts and free wildlife news updates. Sign up at <http://action.defenders.org>.

Adopt a panther. Visit www.wildlifeadoption.org for more information.

Volunteer. Contact Defenders of Wildlife's Florida office for opportunities, 727-823-3888.

Support state and local land conservation and acquisition programs such as the Florida Forever Act.

Drive carefully, especially at night when panthers are most active, for your safety and the safety of wildlife.

Get involved in road and highway planning affecting your community. Call 727-823-3888 to obtain a copy of "The Conservation-Minded Citizen's Guide to Transportation Planning."

Support endangered species programs and laws, such as, the federal Endangered Species Act that save and recover species at risk and the habitat they depend upon. Visit www.saveesa.org.

Order a "Protect the Panther" or "Conserve Wildlife" license plate for your car. A portion of the proceeds from these plates goes to panther research and other wildlife conservation efforts.

Share this booklet with family, friends and neighbors.

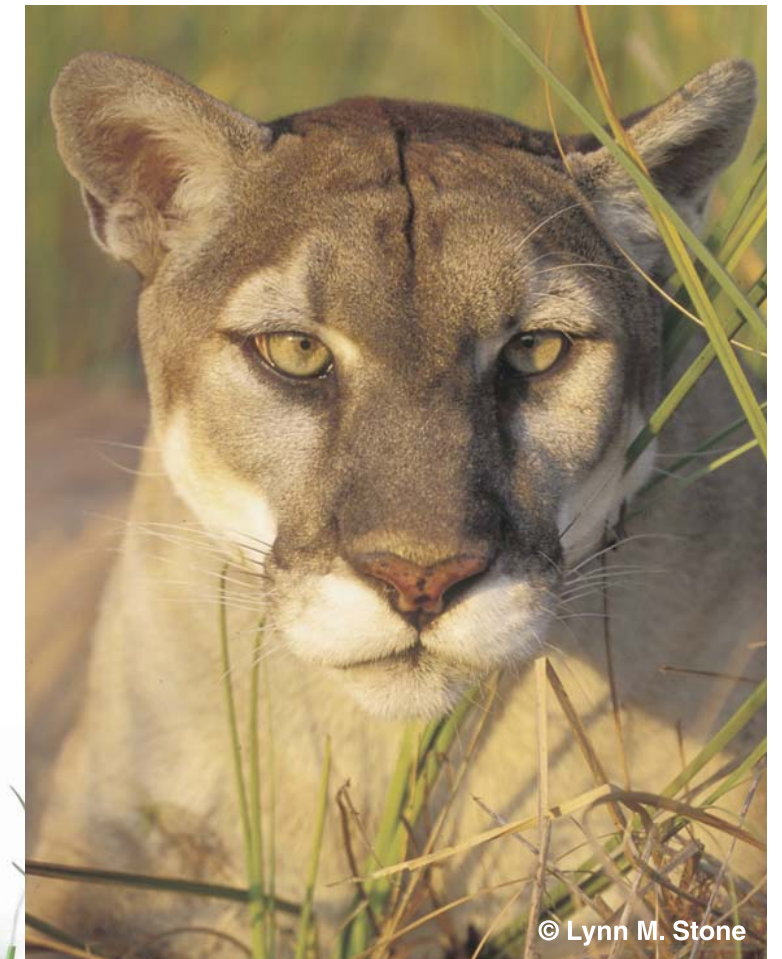


ABOUT DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

Founded in 1947, Defenders of Wildlife is a national nonprofit organization with nearly 500,000 members dedicated to the protection and restoration of native animals and plants in their natural communities. Long recognized as a leader in endangered species issues, Defenders also advocates innovative wildlife conservation approaches that prevent threats to species, sustain entire ecosystems and interconnected habitat, and protect keystone, indicator species such as the wide-ranging wolf, bear and panther. Defenders engages in solution-oriented, science-based advocacy, education, policy development, legislative initiatives and litigation to defend wildlife and its habitat.

This brochure was made possible through a generous grant from the Freed Foundation.

Design by PSCreative, LLC



© Lynn M. Stone

HELP DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
PROTECT FLORIDA PANTHERS
AND OTHER IMPERILED WILDLIFE
BY BECOMING A MEMBER TODAY.

With your tax-deductible donation of \$15 or more you'll receive our exclusive membership benefits including our award winning *Defenders* magazine, 16-month calendar, wildlife note cards and more. Plus, we'll send you a plush Florida panther toy with our thanks.

I want to join Defenders of Wildlife and help protect imperiled species and the habitat they need to survive. Enclosed is my tax deductible membership contribution of:

__\$15 __\$25 __\$50 __\$100 Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Defenders of Wildlife
233 Third Street North
Suite 201
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Please make your check payable to Defenders of Wildlife, or call 1-800-385-9712 to make your gift by phone using your credit card.



Please return this response card in an envelope and keep the panther kitten photo to enjoy.



Larry Richardson

FLORIDA PANTHER: BIG CAT ON THE BRINK

A rare and beautiful symbol of vanishing wild lands, the Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*) once ranged throughout the southeastern United States. The current breeding population of less than 100 is found in southern Florida. **Large areas of connected natural habitat** must be protected to save and recover this wide-roaming carnivore. Defenders of Wildlife is working **to assure that the big cat is adequately protected and that it is reintroduced** to suitable habitat within its historic home. www.defenders.org

