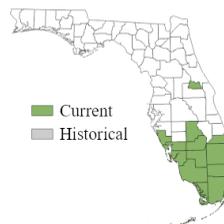


FLORIDA PANTHER

Puma concolor coryi

Order: Carnivora
Family: Felidae
FNAI Ranks: G5T1/S1
U.S. Status: Endangered
FL Status: Endangered



Description: A large (70 - 150 lbs. = 32 - 68 kg) cat with a long tail. Fur is dark buff to tawny above and light buff to white below; muzzle and tip of tail are black. The head is broad, and ears are round. Typical track shows four clawless toe pads around a three-lobed heel pad. Defining characteristics of the subspecies are a dorsal hair whorl, a crook in the tail, and white flecking on the neck and shoulders.

Similar Species: Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) has a short tail and is approximately half the size of a Florida panther. Western cougars (panthers, pumas; different subspecies) occasionally escape captivity or have been released and can be mistaken for Florida panthers; defining characteristics listed above may be unreliable in distinguishing these close relatives.

Habitat: Requires extensive blocks of mostly forested communities. Large wetlands that are generally inaccessible to humans are important for diurnal refuge. Will tolerate improved areas in a mosaic of natural communities.

Seasonal Occurrence: Year-round resident.

Florida Distribution: Collier, Glades, and Lee counties are the stronghold for the Florida panther; Miami-Dade and Monroe counties are also important. Dispersing individuals may range well north in the peninsula searching for new territories.

Range-wide Distribution: Subspecies formerly found throughout the southeastern U.S. from Arkansas and Louisiana east to Georgia and south to Florida.

Conservation Status: Found on several public conservation lands, including Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee State Park, Picayune Strand State Forest, and Everglades National Park. Apparently, numbers are increasing as a result of genetic improvement project.

Florida Panther

Puma concolor coryi

Protection and Management: Maintain viable populations of deer. Develop safe places for crossing highways. Maintain public support for recovery projects.

References: Brown 1997, Humphrey (ed.) 1992, Maehr 1997.



© Jerry Lee Gingerich, DVM