

Florida panther killed on highway

March 23 2007

A panther photographed as a kitten and tracked by scientists for nearly four years has been found dead on Interstate 4 in Florida.

Known as FP130, the male panther was born in May 2003 in the Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest near the Everglades. The panther and a sibling became a favorite of researchers after they were photographed as kittens while playing with their mother.

Fitted with a radio-transmitter collar and looking for females, FP130 roamed north of his original home, said Layne Hamilton, manager of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge.

About one third of the estimated 80 to 100 Florida panthers wear radio collars and between 10 and 20 of the state's panthers are killed every year by cars, disease and fighting with each other, the Orlando Sentinel Staff reported Thursday.

Florida panthers eventually may be doomed by limited range, said Mark Cunningham of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

"Young males look for new territory, and north is the only direction they can go," Cunningham said. "Their habitat is close to filled up."

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