

## **Florida Panther-3rd Grade**

Florida Panthers are a type of Cougar that live in Florida. Adult Florida Panthers have brown fur and golden eyes. Males are usually bigger than females.

Baby Florida Panthers are called kittens. These cats have 1-3 babies in a litter. Kittens have spots on their fur and have blue eyes. After about 18 months of age the kittens leave their mother. They live alone for most of their lives. This is known as a solitary lifestyle.

Florida Panthers are meat eaters. Meat eaters are also called carnivores. Their diet includes deer, wild hogs, raccoons, armadillos and alligators.

These cats are found in pinelands, hardwoods hammocks and swamp forests. Living in an area with a lot of plants helps to protect these cats. Plants make it easier to hide; there may be fewer people and more food/prey nearby. Males have a range/area of over 200 square miles. Females have a range/area of over 70-80 square miles. They make other animals aware of their territory by scent marking.

Fewer than 100 of these cats are believed to remain in Florida. They are one of the rarest mammals in the world. Humans are the biggest threat to the Florida Panther. Although it is against the law they are shot by hunters. Many are killed after being hit by cars. As with many animals a loss of habitat is also impacting their ability to survive.

### **THIRD GRADE:**

1. True or False- While a mother and kitten will live together until the baby is about 18 months of age, Florida Panthers otherwise live a solitary lifestyle.

Answer: True

2. What have humans done to contribute to the decline of the Florida Panther population?

Answer: In addition to hunting, as humans grow in number they take over what previously was the animal's habitat. This also decreases their prey. Panthers are also hit by cars when they attempt to cross roads.