

## **Florida Panther-4th 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 also called carnivores. Their diet includes deer, wild hogs, raccoons, armadillos and alligators. These cats are efficient hunters who can run up to 35 miles per hour briefly. They rest during the day and are most active at dusk and dawn. Panthers are good swimmers, have a keen sense of smell and excellent depth perception.

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. These cats have an unusual number of health problems. 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.

Plans to try and save the Florida Panther focuses on 3 efforts. First is adding and improving habitat/space for this cat. Second is breeding panthers in captivity that will later be released into the wild. Third is breeding the Florida Panther with other types of cougars that live in other parts of the country. This last effort may also help to improve their health.

### **FOURTH GRADE:**

1. The biggest threat to the Florida Panther is humans. What 3 things are humans doing to try and help the panther?

Answer: Secure additional habitat, breed panthers in captivity and study ways to increase genetic variability to improve their health.

2. In a food chain where Panthers are the consumers they are described as efficient hunters. What helps to make them so good at hunting?

Answer: They can run up to speeds of 35 mph for short distances. They can swim; have a keen sense of smell and excellent depth perception.