

The florida panther research paper examples

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The Florida Panther is one of many different species of panthers in the United States. While all are fairly similar, each species has adapted specifically for the terrain and hunting in that particular area. The evolution of the Florida Panther is a tale of an animal that is well equipped to handle its natural environment, but not the interference of humans that has put it on the Endangered Species List.

The taxonomy of the Florida Panther is as follows; “ Kingdom- Animalia, Phylum- Chordata, Subphylum- Vertebrata, Class- Mammalia, Order- Carnivora, Family- Felidae, Subfamily- Felinae, Genus- Puma, Species- concolor, and Subspecies- coryi.” The scientific name for the Florida panther is *Puma concolor coryi*.” (Pimm, Dollar, & Bass, 2005)

The life span of a Florida panther is typically 12 years or more with females being most likely to reach old age. Rivalry between males often shortens their life span. The gestation time for panthers is typically 92 to 96 days. Most litters have between 1 and 4 kittens. At birth kittens are relatively helpless with closed eyes and limited mobility. Kittens usually stay with their mother for a year or more. Females often reach sexual maturity at between 1-2 years old and males typically at 3 years old.

The reproductive system of Florida Panthers is one organ system that is especially adapted to fit the unique and solitary lifestyle of panthers. Because panthers are solitary for most of the year, their reproductive system has adapted to allow for induced ovulation. Because females might rarely happen upon a male during her time of ovulation, this induced ovulation allows for an egg to be released upon copulation instead of spontaneous ovulation like most social mammals. Panthers are considered polygamous,

meaning they often mate with more than one male. The reproductive system allows for different kittens within the same litter to have different fathers, depending on how many other males the female copulated with. This evolutionary trait is designed so panthers can continue a solitary lifestyle yet still reproduce successfully.

Evolutionarily the Florida panther originated from a line of cats over 30 million years ago. Cats eventually split into two forms, those with large canine teeth and tree dwelling cats. The cats with large canine's more commonly known as Sabretooths eventually went extinct unable to cope with climate and environmental changes. Felids were much more capable of adaptation than their larger counterparts. The ability to live in a variety of environments insured their survival. Panthers, as we recognize in their current state of evolution, have been around for roughly 3 million year. Panthers evolved to adapt to their natural environment. Numerous subspecies exist all with slight variations of color, size, and diet as a result. The Florida panther as a kitten, has a spotted coat. The spots serve as camouflage to protect from predators and insure their survival. Panthers stay with their mothers much longer than many other feline species, this is likely due to the solitary nature of panthers making it more essential for mothers to adequately teach and prepare their cubs to take care of themselves before letting them out alone into the world. The tawny tan coat of the adult Florida panther also fits within the local landscape making it easier to hunt. The Florida panther is also nearly the same color as its main prey, Whitetail Deer (Gross, 2005). As a strictly carnivore, the panther had ample prey particularly the wild boar and deer or Southern Florida. The long rounded tail

also assists with balance and maneuverability.

While the Florida panther was relatively well adapted to its natural environment, by 1970 as few as six Florida panthers existed. So how did a prevalent species go down so fast? The answer lies with their inability to adapt to the influx of humans intruding on their natural environments. The main cause of death being motor vehicles, hunters, and loss of habitat. In order to save the species from extinction with such low numbers, geneticists began to mix the genes of both Everglade and Cypress subspecies (Clark, 1993). The inbreeding between such a low numbers of panthers was of concern. The Florida panther is now undergoing a genetic restoration in attempt to restore hybrid vigor and gene diversity among the small panther population. If Florida panthers are able to adapt to these changes then they might have a chance to eventually recover. Despite some misunderstandings, these cats are pure Florida panthers, despite having some slight deviations based on their area of origin.

Overall, the Florida panther is one that must continue to evolve if it is to every make it off of the endangered species list. The solitary nature and long kitten hood of the Florida panther makes for slow reproductive cycles, as a result many are killed quicker than they can reproduce. The very reproductive system that evolved to accommodate their solitary lifestyle also failed them when man interfered with the process.

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