

DRAFT

To: Kevin Erwin
From: Bill Cox
Date: 03/05/04
Re: DPGCC101#2 – Panther Sighting – Ona Ft. Green Extension

During field surveys on Thursday, March 4, 2004 at 3:50 pm a Florida panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) was observed crossing an unimproved road (trail) east of Horse Creek within the Ona Ft. Green Extension. The panther (approximately six feet long) bolted across the narrow road to the southeast along the Horse Creek corridor. The panther was observed by myself and Robert L. Harrison, III, a.k.a. Tray (ECT Field Technician). I questioned Robert after he had driven forward approximately 100 yards to the gate on what he observed. I was behind Robert and to the side when we observed the panther. Robert said at first he didn't know what he saw until he observed the cat running to the south and saw the long tail. He agreed he saw a panther for the first time in his life. I observed the panther as it leaped in front of Robert's truck and ran into the woods. I did not feel there was a chance of obtaining tracks due to the vegetation and the speed in which the panther left the area.

We left the area to observe a potential Audubon's crested caracara territory and returned to the area of the panther observation at 4:45 pm. Those that returned to the area of the sighting included Robert L. Harrison, III, a.k.a. Tray (Field Technician-ECT), Robert L. Harrison, Jr. (Field Services Manager-ECT), Dorene Donovan (Ecologist-ECT), Thomas B. Gunter (Gunter Ecological Consulting Company), Kris Bowman (Ecologist-KLECE), and myself. Tracks and other sign were searched for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. No fresh tracks or sign were observed in the direction the panther departed. Kris and I also searched for tracks in the fire break north of the unimproved road with no success (soil in the fire break was very hard). One old track south of the unimproved road was the size of a panther track (3" to 4 1/4" long by 3 1/4" to 4 3/4" wide for front and hind tracks, respectively). The track was approximately 3 1/4" long and 4 1/4" wide. However, it was very old and the track could not be positively identified. Before leaving the area Thomas Gunter took a GPS

reading where the panther crossed the unimproved road and he gave me the coordinates (27° 31' 55.14" N and 82° 1' 4.23" W). I also marked the location of the panther sighting on a 1" = 400' vegetation aerial.

It was not possible for the short observation time (a few seconds) to determine positively if the panther was a Florida panther or Texas cougar.

If you have any questions, please call.