

July 1, 2025

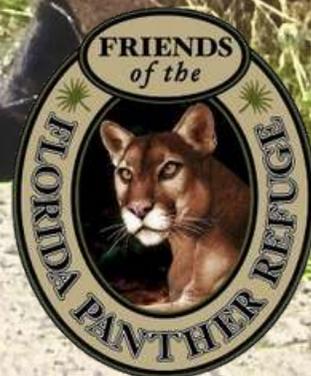
FPNWR

Issue. 01

Friends of the
Florida Panther
National Wildlife Refuge
**THE FLORIDA
PANTHER
PROWL**

Quarterly Newsletter

El Morris, Kelly McAdams, Ph.D. & Tandria Burke





Friends of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge Quarterly Newsletter

THE FLORIDA PANTHER PROWL

By: El Morris, Kelly McAdams, Ph.D. & Tandria Burke

Issue. 01
July 1, 2025



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge

WELCOME

Welcome to our first quarterly newsletter!

A new issue of The Florida Panther Prowl newsletter will be released on a quarterly basis. You can expect Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge updates, Friends group updates, trail camera photos, “Kelly’s Kitten Corner,” where kids can learn about wildlife and conservation, with a lot more to come from this newsletter!

About the Friends

Friends of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is a volunteer-driven organization separate from the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) itself. Our purpose lies in supporting the goals of the FPNWR. We aim to contribute to the recovery of the Florida panther, as well as to promote a better understanding and appreciation of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Friends Activities and Advocacy

The Friends work to safeguard the FPNWR through education, outreach, advocacy, and active participation in Refuge projects. Many of our projects center on restoring the Florida panther and its habitat within its historic Southern range. We also focus on protecting the native flora and fauna found on the FPNWR and its partner refuge, Ten Thousand Islands NWR.

We have members from all over the country! Our Board of Directors consists of members residing throughout Florida, from Clearwater to Miami. The Friends meet every other month via Zoom to determine what projects on the FPNWR need our support, what the best advocacy and fundraising strategies are, and what new challenges the Florida panther faces.

THE FLORIDA PANTHER PROWL

The Refuge and Us

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/florida-panther>

While we work alongside one another, the FPNWR and the Friends are two differing entities. Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge is a non-profit, all-volunteer group that functions separately from the refuge. We are a group of like-minded individuals who support the refuge and its endeavors.

The FPNWR itself is managed by four staff members who oversee the trails, work to restore the Florida panther's habitat, protect the refuge's biodiversity, and engage in scientific studies on and off site. FPNWR lost a valuable biologist during the February period of federal job cuts; **that is half of the refuge's biology personnel.**



Figure 2. Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge

The refuge is 26,605 acres in size and hosts an extensive variety of unique species and habitats. There are two public trails open daily from dawn to dusk, located off of I-29. The refuge itself is categorized as a “closed refuge”, remaining unopen to the public for 364 days of the year. It is open, however, during the annual Save the Florida Panther Day event. It is crucial to note that the FPNWR is NOT a wildlife sanctuary.



Figure 3. FPNWR 0.3-mile wheelchair accessible Leslie M. Duncan Memorial Trail



Figure 4. FPNWR 1.3-mile Panther Trail

Ten Thousand Islands

<https://www.gov/refuge/ten-thousand-islands>

Friends of the FPNWR also support the Ten Thousand Islands NWR. This refuge is approximately 35,000 acres in size, with several

canoe trails, hiking areas, recreational activities, and an observation deck available to the public. Around two-thirds of this refuge consists of mangrove forest, with the last third made up of marsh and hammock habitat.

The Ten Thousand Islands NWR engages in sea turtle management, as well as invasive species and fire management within its range. Their website contains multitudes of information

pertaining to the refuge's history and mission



Figure 5. View of Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge from birding tower

Education and Events

The Friends co-host the Save the Florida Panther Day celebration each year at the refuge during March. This event includes activities such as fishing, swamp buggy rides, swamp walks, and educational talks.

An annual meeting open to all Friends members is typically held the first week of November, as to coincide with the Florida Panther Festival at the Naples Zoo.

On our website, we provide a surplus of educational materials, all accessible to both our members and the public. The Friends attend outreach events held all across Southwest Florida.



Figure 6. Refuge Manager, Erin Myers and Friends board President, Becca Bryan tabling at The Swamp Heritage Festival at Big Cypress National Preserve



Figure 7. Fishing clinic at Save the Florida Panther Day event



KELLY'S KITTEN CORNER



By Kelly McAdams, Ph.D., Friends Board Secretary, VP of Conservation Education, Clearwater Marine Aquarium

Welcome to Kelly's Kitten Corner, a subsection of our newsletter focused on biological education for kids! This quarter's topic: refuge versus sanctuary!

Do you know the difference between a refuge and a sanctuary?

"Refuge" often refers to areas managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), namely National Wildlife Refuges. These areas are conserved wild spaces that are managed to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. They provide essential protection for endangered species, support biodiversity, and allow for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

"Sanctuary" can refer to various protected areas within a state. We have a variety of sanctuaries in Florida, including Sanctuary Preservation Areas within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. These marine areas protect specific habitats, like shallow reefs, to sustain critical species. Regulations may limit activities like fishing, while allowing others, such as diving and boating.

"Sanctuary" can also mean a facility providing a lifelong home for wildlife under human care. These must be operated by qualified non-profit organizations and follow distinct regulations. Many people think that the FPNWR is a place where captive panthers live and are cared for by humans, but it is not.

The state of Florida is declared both a "refuge and sanctuary" for the manatee under the Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act.

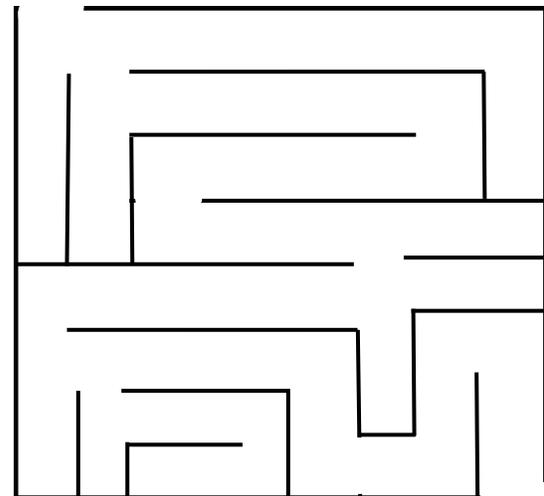
Key Differences:

1. Refuges are primarily federally managed (USFWS) and focus on conserving wildlife and habitats
2. Sanctuaries in Florida can be marine zones or facilities for wildlife under human care
3. While refuges often allow compatible public access, sanctuaries may have stricter limits depending on their purpose

Word Search

PANTHERCONSERVE
 LNB JMXTRRPGT JFH
 XHTFUSFWSNUWFLU
 OGWENDANGEREDOM
 QVHAREFUGEZPYRA
 BIODIVERSITYYIN
 BDKSANCTUARYKDC
 SHYMMSJGOTLUCAA
 MCAREGULATIONSR
 ULBCGSJDFKJEQZE

biodiversity
 conserve
 human care
 USFWS
 endangered
 panther
 Florida
 regulations sanctuary
 refuge



Help Us Raise Funds for Refuge Needs

Donate Online here:

<https://www.floridapanther.org/donate>

Mail checks to:

Friends of the Florida
Panther Refuge
P.O. Box 1939
Marco Island, FL 34146

Donate in honor of or in
memory of someone, set
up regular donations!

Connect with us:

Email:

contact@floridapanther.org

Website:

www.floridapanther.org

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/FOFPR>

Instagram :

@Friendsoftheflpantherrefuge

Scan me!



Partnerships:

Friends of the Florida Panther partners with the following organizations and agencies.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (**FWC**)

Defenders of Wildlife

Live Wildly

Conservation Collier

The National Wildlife Refuge Association

The Coalition of Refuge Friends and Associates (**COFRA**)

Friends of National Wildlife Refuges, Hatcheries, and Rookeries

We extend many thanks to them for all of the work they help us accomplish.

