

Panther Shadows

Program: Panther: Shadow of the Swamp/Everglades Ecosystem

After reading *Panther: Shadow of the Swamp* by Jonathan London, participants will create a background image of the swamp ecosystem they have learned about. Then, a panther silhouette or outline will be given to them to place over the swamp, emphasizing the link between the big cat and its environment. They can also attach the drawing to a cardstock frame.

Objectives:

- Educate participants about the Florida panther and its role in the ecosystem.
- Discuss the history of the recovery of the species throughout the 20th century and now
- Emphasize the importance of respecting these creatures and what steps humans can take to further protect the cats for future generations.

Materials Needed:

- White cardstock, 6" x 8.5"
- Multicolored cardstock, 8.5" x 11"
- Panther silhouette (filled in), multiple color choices
- Panther outline (cut out – use Cricut or print and cut out with scissors), multiple color choices
- Glue
- Coloring implements (markers or colored pencils are best)

Alternative/Pre-activity:

- Coloring sheet of a panther.

Activity Plan

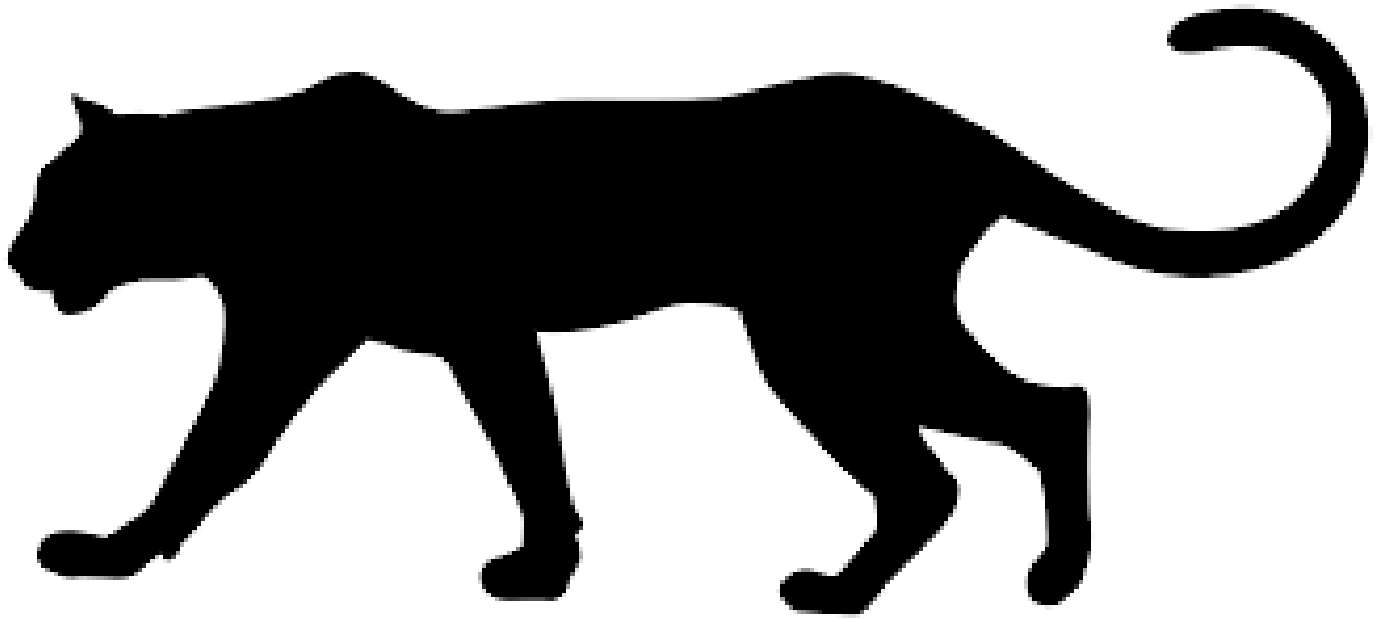
Once participants have learned about the ecosystem the panther lives in, they are encouraged to recreate the plants and trees of the swamp on the white cardstock.

After drawing the swamp, the colored cardstock can be glued to the back to frame the swamp using any color they choose. If participants do not want to create this effect, they can use a bigger sheet of white cardstock to draw on or skip the “framing” step.

Last, using a panther cut out or a silhouette, participants can glue the panther over their swamp, creating a “shadow of the swamp.” Depending on if they use a cut out or a silhouette, they will get a different visual effect. If they want to color in the panther, that is also an option.

The end result should show the panther in its natural habitat.

This can be made more involved by cutting out some of the plant shapes in the swamp frame and using the panther silhouette between the plant cuts out, to give a 3D effect.



Historical Research/Works Cited

- The Florida panther was listed as endangered in 1967 by the Department of the Interior, with a population in rapid decline from habitat loss and hunting. With habitat protection and the introduction of Texas cougar genes into the Florida population, stability has returned to the small group but recovery is ongoing.¹
- The panther will continue to remain on the endangered species list until there are three separate, healthy populations across the peninsula with over 200 cats per area.²
- The Florida panther is taxonomically known as *Puma concolor coryi*, with Charles Barney Cory being the first to describe Florida's subspecies in 1896. *Concolor* is Latin for "one color," that is, the panther's adult coat is a uniform tan or light brown in color.³ Scientific literature identifies between six and thirty subspecies of puma.⁴
- Smaller cats have elliptically shaped pupils because they hunt primarily after dark and their eyes can open wider to increase their night vision. Pumas have round pupils, making hunting effective during the day possible as well.⁵
- Panthers cannot roar. They do not have the small piece of cartilage at the base of their tongue to do so. Bobcats, cheetahs, lynx, and domestic cats also cannot roar.⁶
- Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca, the treasurer for the Narvaez expedition to La Florida in 1527, described seeing a "lion" on their journey through Southwest Florida.⁷

¹ <https://www.floridapanther.org/panther-facts>.

² <https://www.floridapanther.org/panther-facts>; https://www.fws.gov/refuge/florida_panther/wah/panther.html

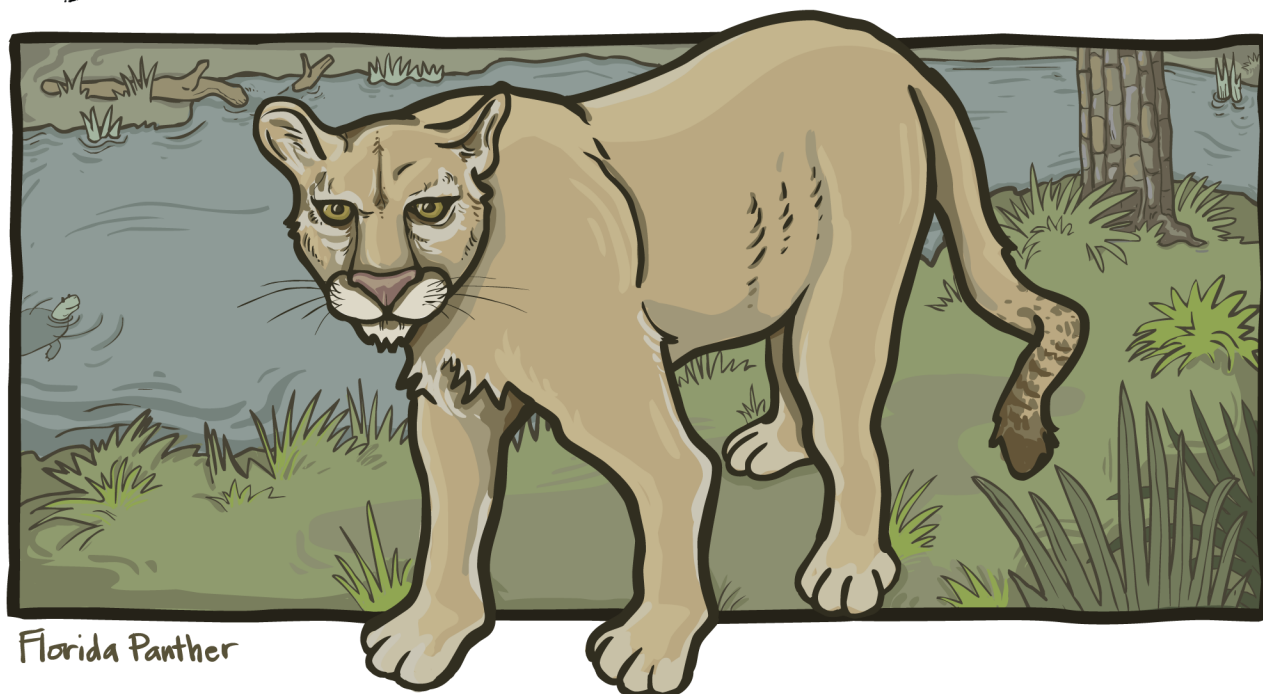
³ "Physical Description," <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/panther/description/>

⁴ <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/panther/description/>

⁵ "Physical Description," <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/panther/description/>

⁶ "Physical Description," <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/panther/description/>

⁷ "What's in a Name?," <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/panther/description/>



Florida Panther

Florida Panther *(Puma concolor coryi)*

Instant ID

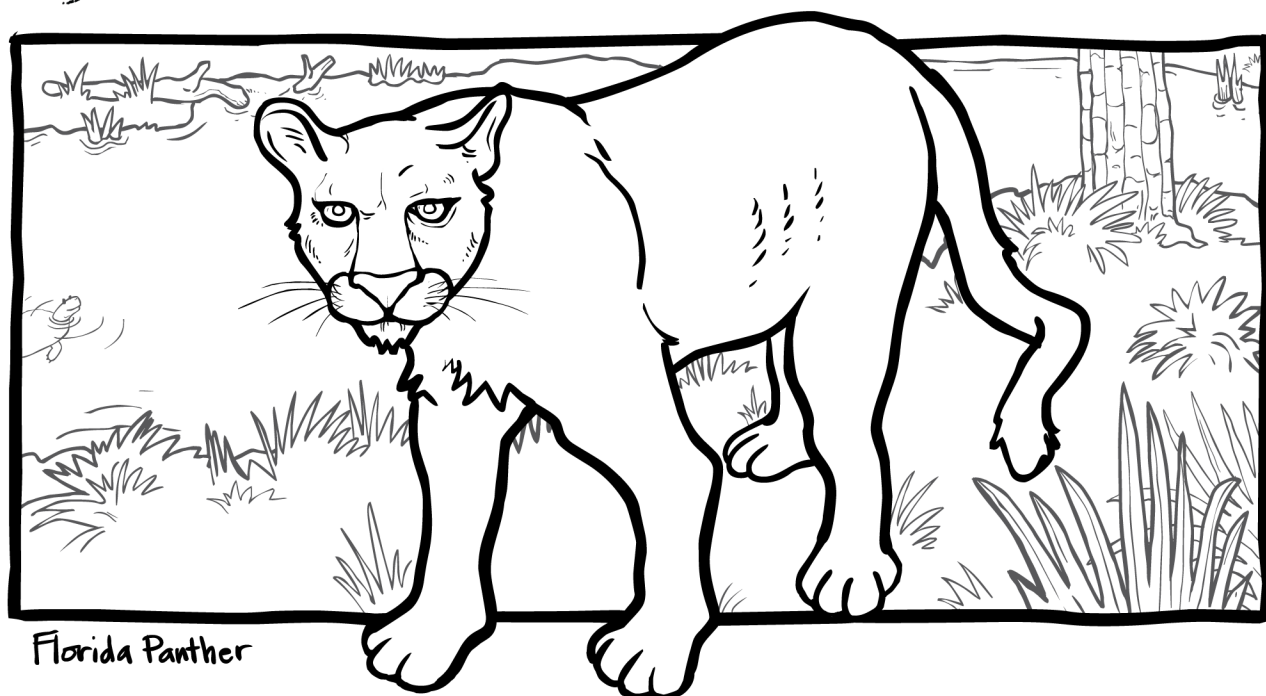
- A large cat, weighing as much as 160 pounds
- Solid tawny-colored body with a white mouth, pink nose and black-tipped tail
- Young have spots, which fade within the first six months

Native Niches

- Formerly found throughout Florida and seven other states
- Highly adaptable to any land habitat, but now limited to the forests and swamps of South Florida
- Fewer than 170 panthers remain in the wild

Favorite Foods

- Usually eats deer and feral hogs, however will eat smaller prey



Florida Panther *(Puma concolor coryi)*

Critter Characteristics

- Capable of killing prey larger than itself
- Designated Florida's state animal
- More closely related to a housecat than a lion
- A subspecies of the puma, also known as painter, catamount, mountain lion and cougar

Population Protection

- Overhunting and habitat loss led to the panthers' listing as an endangered species
- Protect wild spaces to keep panthers around for future generations
- Collisions with vehicles cause the most panther deaths, observe panther crossing signs and posted speed limits



NATIVE

Florida Panther

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