

# Earthtalk

## From the Editors of E/The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: What’s the story with the Florida Panther these days? Is it still teetering on the brink of extinction, or is it on the rebound?

-- Alex T., via email

One of more than 20 subspecies of cougar and native to the southeastern United States, the Florida Panther is most certainly still highly endangered. Biologists estimate that less than 100 of the animals are alive in the wild today, hanging on in the southern tip of Florida below the Caloosahatchee River. Their current range represents less than five percent of where they originally roamed across Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and parts of Tennessee and South Carolina.

Perceived as a threat to humans, livestock and game animals, the Florida Panther was persecuted and hunted to near extinction by the mid-1950s. Today, primary threats are habitat loss and fragmentation as a result of human development. According to Defenders of Wildlife, the main culprits in the decline of the animals’ numbers are: urban sprawl; the conversion of once diversified agricultural lands into intensified industrial farming uses; and the loss of farmland to commercial development. Other factors include collisions with automobiles, territorial disputes with other panthers as habitat shrinks, and inbreeding resulting from their isolated population. Additional threats include mercury poisoning from the fallout of coal-fired power plants, parasites, and diseases such as feline leukemia and feline distemper.

Efforts to help the Florida Panther recover have had limited success. Many public agencies and nonprofit groups have worked together to try to bring back the panther—Florida’s state animal—since it was first listed as endangered by the federal government back in

1967. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), panthers require large areas of contiguous habitat: Each breeding unit of one male and two to five females requires some 200 square miles of territory to thrive. Biologists report that a population of 240 panthers requires between 8,000 and 12,000 square miles of habitat and sufficient genetic diversity in order to avoid inbreeding as a result of small population size. The introduction of eight female cougars from a closely related Texas population in 1995 helped mitigate inbreeding problems, but most analysts fear that the effort was too little, too late for the threatened cats.

Since the animals were first listed as endangered, the human population of Florida has more than tripled, meaning that rescue efforts are swimming against the tide. Defenders of Wildlife reports that, since 2004, human-panther encounters have been on the rise, as have documented instances of panthers preying on livestock and pets. In response, the USFWS, the National Park Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have drafted a landmark Florida Panther Response Plan, which guides game managers and law enforcement officials in handling such interactions in ways that ensure public safety while recognizing the need to preserve dwindling Florida Panther populations.

Readers can help by getting educated about the plight of the big cats and pressuring their elected officials to take action. Another way to help is by supporting wildlife groups working on the issue. Defenders of Wildlife’s “Adopt a Panther” program, for one, puts donations into public education, preserving habitat and promoting sound transportation planning to prevent panther deaths on Florida’s roads and highways.

Send your environmental questions to: earthtalk@emagazine.com.

## History

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15-block site on both sides of Marine Avenue between Sepulveda and Pacific Avenue.

However, there was one area of land that was not used by the residents of the town. The United States Government had condemned hundreds of lots located east of Ardmore Avenue to Flournoy Road and south to 14<sup>th</sup> Street, for the duration of the war. Battery E Coastal Artillery as well as two eight-inch railroad battery guns occupied the land. The purpose of their arrival was to protect the South Bay coastline.

Battery E arrived in town from New Jersey on Christmas Eve, 1941. Approximately 100 soldiers camped out in Live Oak Park that first night, later putting up orderly tent rows between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> streets on Flournoy Road. Gun No. 1 and Gun No. 2 rolled on a spur track, which came off from the Santa Fe railroad line. In February of 1942, the spur and support bunkers were built across the crest of the hill. After the war, the railroad spur was removed with the bunkers being removed in 1949.

The soldiers and dogs patrolled the shore to keep the public off the beach and they used The Strand as a transport road until trucks demolished two lampposts. The City of Manhattan Beach forbade multi-axle vehicles along the walkway and billed the Army \$100 for the posts. The military also enforced blackout rules and dim-out headlight regulations.

The residents welcomed the soldiers by opening their homes for a night, weekend or for a home-cooked meal. For entertainment and dances, the troops could go to the local USO, one of the nine victory houses,

or the Badminton Club. During the war, the Badminton Club had been used by the US Army as a barracks, as well as for dances sponsored by the club members.

A building, owned by the Standard Oil Company at Highland Avenue and Center Street (now Manhattan Beach Boulevard) was donated to the USO for a recreation center. Outfitted with easy chairs and tables, the soldiers could write letters, listen to music and play ping-pong. One soldier was quoted in the newspaper as saying when he sank into an easy chair, “It’s been a long time since I sat in an easy chair like that.”

The war at home was dominated by the Red Cross with its first headquarters located at 1100 Manhattan Avenue, later to move to 330 Center Street in 1942. Under the leadership of Maude Withers, the organization made and sent aid packages overseas, as did the Sandy Shores Navy Mothers Club, which was made up of mothers and wives of service men and women.

The war even changed the daily lives of schoolchildren. There were no interscholastic sports due to the rationing of tires, which created a lack of transportation between schools. Plus, there weren’t enough boys to form a football team. Physical training with military-type equipment was emphasized for those high school boys not yet in the service.

Much more information and photographs about the activities in Manhattan Beach during World War II can be found in *A Walk Beside the Sea*, as well as in *Shadows On The Dunes*, both by Jan Dennis)

To be continued... •



## 2009 Herald Publications Best of the Best Awards

Herald Publications Best of the Best Awards gives the community an opportunity to let their voices be heard. The rules are very simple. All one has to do is submit a completed entry form to Herald Publications’ office by **September 10, 2009. Results of this survey will be published in the September 17, 2009 issue.**

**Each individual in the community is invited to vote one time only.** The completed form must be on an original page of the newspaper. No photocopied entries will be accepted. To include your entry in our contest, simply fill the name of your favorite

establishment(s) and the city in which they are located, in the blank below each category. Then, mail or bring in your completed entry form by **September 10, 2009 at noon to:**

**Herald Publications**  
Attn: Best of the Best  
312 E. Imperial Ave.  
El Segundo, CA 90245

***Entry forms that are partially completed will be accepted however at least 20 of the categories must have entries.***

**BREAKFAST**

**LUNCH**

**DINNER**

**HAPPY HOUR**

**PIZZA**

**ITALIAN**

**CHINESE**

**MEXICAN**

**JAPANESE**

**DONUT SHOP**

**SANDWICH SHOP**

**GIFT STORE**

**PHYSICAL THERAPY/WELLNESS**

**FLOORING/CARPET**

**YOGURT SHOP**

**ICE CREAM SHOP**

**REALTOR - MALE**

**HANDYMAN**

**VIDEO RENTAL**

**NAIL SALON**

**BEAUTY SHOP**

**JEWELRY STORE**

**CLOTHING STORE**

**COMPUTER STORE**

**FLOWER SHOP**

**HOTEL**

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