

Florida panther

(*Puma concolor coryi*)

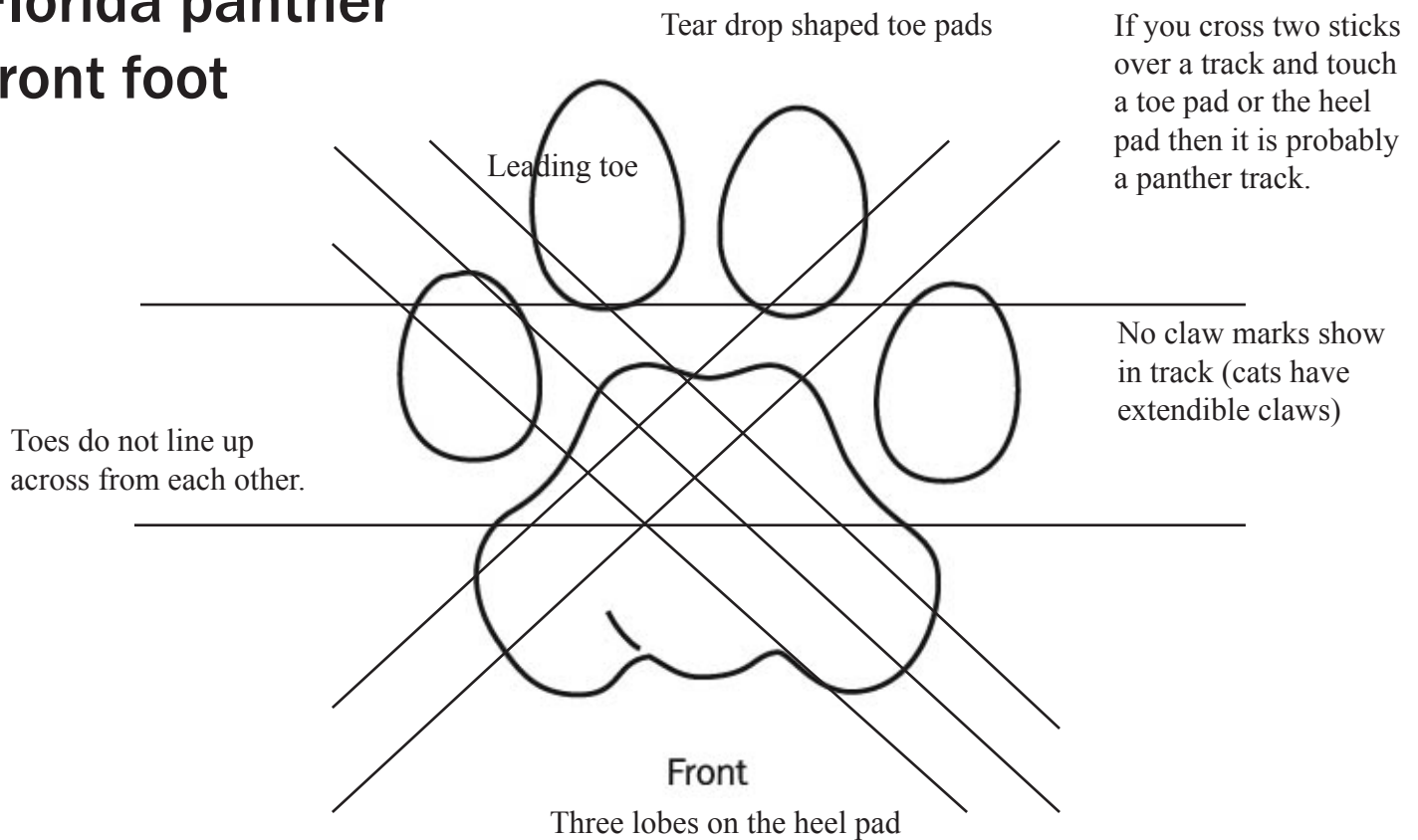
Concolor means one color. Panther adults are a uniform tawny color with lighter fur on their lower chests, belly, and inner legs. Shades of individual animals may vary considerably from grayish to reddish to yellowish (Busch 1996). This uniform color conceals them effectively in a variety of settings including the open range. The subspecies name *coryi* comes from naturalist and hunter Charles Barney Cory who first described the panther as a subspecies of cougar in 1896 in *Hunting and Fishing in Florida*.



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Liz West, FWC

Florida panther front foot



Dog track - splayed toes, claw marks, inside toes line up next to each other, outside toes line up across from each other. An "X" placed over the track does not touch toe pads or heel pad. Heel pad is more of a triangle shape.



Panther

FAST FACT

Bigger than Disney!

The home range of a male panther is 400 times as large as the Magic Kingdom. The female's range is 150 times as large.

Florida panthers are like all cats. They all have skeletons that permit maximum flexibility. The spine of a cat is extremely flexible. The vertebrae are largely held together by muscles instead of ligaments, allowing the cat to twist, compress, lengthen, and turn in pursuit of prey. Cat flexibility is also enhanced by the fact that the front legs of the cat are attached directly to the shoulder blades, a feature that allows the cat to stalk with its belly to the ground. This also allows the cat to pivot its front legs and grasp prey with its claws. Much of their body weight consists of muscles, and most are baggy skinned, which allows a wide range of motion and helps protect their internal organs during fights.

Panthers are solitary, elusive animals and are rarely observed in the wild. Since 1981 scientists have fitted many Florida panthers with radio collars to help keep track of their movements. Still, much of what we know about panthers comes from what they leave behind: tracks, scrapes, scratches, scat (feces), and prey remains.

All populations of animals need food, shelter, water, and access to mates to survive. Many animals, including Florida panthers, establish home ranges (an area they use habitually) to meet these needs. Established male panthers have large well-defined home ranges that overlap with those of females. Males are usually intolerant of the presence of other males within their ranges whereas females often share portions of their range, and sometimes even the entire range, with other females. The home range of male panthers is about 520 square km and the home range of female panthers is about 195 square km. Since the female's range is smaller, prey animals must be abundant, especially when she is raising kittens. Young males are often without a home range of their own. They are forced to live on the periphery of residents' home ranges where prey is less abundant. They have to cover more territory (an average of 620 square km) to survive. Referred to as transients, these males are usually prevented by resident males from breeding. The death of an established male is usually required before a transient is able to establish a territory of his own and breed.

