

From Tim Tetzlaff, Director of Conservation and Communications

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Save the Panther Week Kicks Off at Naples Zoo

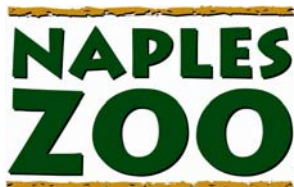
Biologists and conservation groups to educate zoo guests

Naples, FL – The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge, and numerous conservation organizations are kicking off Save the Panther Week at Naples Zoo this Saturday, March 8. Events throughout the following week will culminate in the state’s official Save the Panther Day on March 15 being celebrated at Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge.

With the growing interest in our local panthers, this event provides an excellent opportunity for the public to directly interact with panther experts and get a first hand look at what’s being done to save our state animal. At the zoo itself, guests have the ability to get directly involved with panther efforts by joining the Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge, the official support organization for the Refuge, as well as meet representatives from the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, Defenders of Wildlife, FGCU’s Wings of Hope program, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, The Naples Preserve, Picayune State Forest, Rookery Bay, and National Wildlife Federation. Special Panther Day kids’ activities will also be offered.

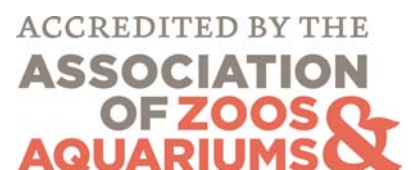
Wildlife biologists Larry Richardson and Mark Lotz will join the Zoo’s Planet Predator show at 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. to give an update on this local endangered species. Guests will also have the opportunity to ask these experts questions during special *Meet the Biologist* presentations at 11:00 and 2:00 at the Zoo’s Panther Glade exhibit, an interactive exhibit created in cooperation with National Wildlife Federation®. Children’s activities and face painting will take place all day, sponsored by the Wings of Hope program at FGCU, the Naples Preserve and the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

Naples Zoo is hosting this kick-off event to highlight the state’s official Save the Panther Day on March 15. On that day, the Refuge is offering select opportunities to explore the Panther Refuge from a swamp buggy or walking the trails while learning about birds, plants and orchids in their native habitat. The Refuge will be offering tours, educational information, an advocacy workshop, and fun kid’s activities!



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For more information about all Save the Panther Week events and information about reserving a spot on the free tours at the Refuge on March 15, click on the calendar link at www.floridapanther.org, the official site of the Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge.

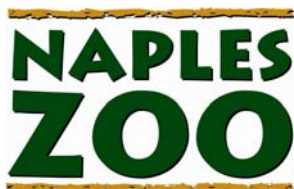
Naples Zoo is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization cooperating in conservation programs both in and outside the wild for endangered species. Daily presentations include Alligator Bay Feeding, Meet the Keeper Series, along with two premiere presentations: Planet Predator and Serpents: Fangs & Fiction. Both of these feature shows take place in the Safari Canyon Theater where guests see live animals from feline predators to venomous snakes along with exciting video footage. For those looking for more on the historic botanical garden, the Tropical Plant Trek offers guests a short tour led by University of Florida Master Gardeners. And one of the zoo's most popular activities is the Primate Expedition Cruise where guests embark on a guided cruise through islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes.

The all day pay-one-price ticket includes admission to both the nationally accredited zoo and historic garden along with all shows, tours, exhibits, and the boat ride. (\$18.75 adults age 13+/ \$10.50 children 3 to 12, under 3 free. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age). **Annual memberships and discount tickets are also available online at www.napleszoo.org.** Visitors enjoy healthy meals at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. Naples Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30 and is located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from the Coastland Center mall in the heart of Naples. To learn more, click www.napleszoo.org or call (239) 262-5409.

Print Quality Image of cats in Panther Glade available for immediate download at www.napleszoo.org/press under "Images of Shows, Exhibits, Gardens and More"

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