

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge - Swamp Buggy Tour

Date: **Saturday**, January 16, 2010

Focus: **Wildlife** – This field trip will focus on the wildlife, habitat and ecology of the area visited and is NOT primarily a birding field trip.

Field Trip Description: Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge is one of the last bastions for the endangered Florida panther. Established in 1989 and leading the way for research & conservation, the tour will consist of a swamp buggy ride through the Northern end of the Fakahatchee Strand as well as the upland areas. You will go through hardwood hammocks, pine flatwoods, wet prairies, and mixed pine hardwood forest. Don't expect to see panthers, but hopefully during the ride, the higher perspective might allow you to catch a glimpse of deer, turkey, armadillo, hawks, owls, woodpeckers and the others neighbors that live in the panther's habitat.

Maximum Group Size: 12

Time Begin: 8:00 am

Time End: 11:00 am

Where to Meet: Meet by **7:45 am** at the **ROGER ROTH WORK CENTER**, on the Florida Panther NWR, North of the Panther Trailhead. This meeting time will allow for coordination of participants and quick use of on-site restrooms.

Directions to Meeting Place: Coming from Naples, head east on I-75 (Alligator Alley) toward Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Drive 21 miles to Exit 80 which is the exit for State Road 29. On SR 29 take a left heading north towards Immokalee (cross over the interstate) and continue for less than one mile. **Pass the trail parking lot entrance and look for a black mailbox and address number 13233 on the gate on the left side of the road.**

There is a small hill that limits visibility. Please be sure to look both ways when making the left turn into our driveway because sometime speeders try to pass from behind!

You will see a sign that says "**Roger Roth Work Center**" just inside the gate. Take the driveway all the way down past the work center to the pond and park in front of the pond. Restrooms are located inside the Work Center Building.

Please allow approximately 30 minutes driving time from the Collier Blvd (CR951) & I-75 interchange (Exit 101).

Map:



Trip Leader: Layne Hamilton, Refuge Manager, US Fish & Wildlife Service – Florida Panther Refuge

Field trip cost: \$10 with Festival registration

Additional Information: In order to step up into the swamp buggy, participants need to be able to climb up into the 4 to 5 foot high buggies (like climbing a ladder with the rungs far apart). There is no other way to get into these vehicles.

We should finish the tour with enough time for participants to eat lunch and return to Rookery Bay for the afternoon presentations. There are no restaurants in the area so you will need to return all the way to Naples for food. If participants want to enjoy a picnic lunch at the refuge, please let Layne know before the beginning of the tour.

What to Bring: Binoculars, camera, water, sunscreen, and insect repellent.

What to Wear: Hats, Long pants and hiking shoes recommended.

Revised: 9/3/2009

