

# **National Wildlife Refuge Centennial Celebration and Opening of Panther Exhibit at the Zoo's Annual Save the Panther Day**

**What:** This Saturday, Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples is hosting its annual Save the Panther Day. This year's event at the zoo was also chosen by Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) to be the local centennial celebration of the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, the zoo will be opening Panther Glade, its new educational display about the endangered Florida Panther, a joint project with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). Wildlife biologists and other experts from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge, and National Wildlife Federation will be present to talk about panthers as well as the importance of the nation's refuges. Guests who join the refuge's Friends group will receive a free adult zoo admission with the purchase of one adult admission.

**When:** **8 February 2003**

**Where:** Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples  
1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from Coastland Center

**Why:** This annual event is designed to both create awareness about the endangered panther as well as let people know how they can get involved in helping the panthers. The zoo is also greatly honored to be chosen by FPNWR as the location for their public celebration of 100 years of conservation in our national refuge system.

**Photo Ops:** 10:15 a.m. Vine Cutting for the opening of Panther Glade by Wesley Woolf of NWF and Zoo Director David Tetzlaff.

10:50 & 3:45 Wildlife biologist Larry Richardson from the Panther Refuge and zookeeper at a special presentation of the Meet the Keeper Series at Panther Glade.

11:30 & 3:00 Wildlife biologist Larry Richardson in Safari Canyon presenting remotely taken images of the Refuge and its panthers.

Ongoing: Guests getting **nose to nose with the cats** through the glass panels at Panther Glade. Guests speaking with biologists at official Refuge booths.

**Interviews:** **Zoo:** David Tetzlaff, zoo director;/ **FPNWR:** Layne Hamilton, Manager; Ben Nottingham, Assistant Manager; Larry Richardson, wildlife biologist/ **NWF:** Wesley Woolf, environmental policy specialist/ **Friends:** Brian Call, Vice-President

**Contact:** **Tim Tetzlaff**, Director of Education, Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples  
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**Larry Richardson**, wildlife biologist, FPNWR, (239) 353-8442 ext. 224

**CARIBBEAN GARDENS**  
**The ZOO in Naples**

**Media Release from  
Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples**

One of the top 10% of the nation's zoos accredited by the prestigious American Zoo and Aquarium Association.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **Centennial Celebration of National Wildlife Refuges and Opening of Panther Exhibit at the Zoo's Annual Save the Panther Day**

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As part of its annual push to increase support for the local refuge, Caribbean Gardens is offering a free adult zoo admission with the purchase of one adult admission to anyone who joins the Friends of the Florida Panther Refuge this Saturday. Past events have more than doubled the membership in the Friends group.

Visitors will also have the chance to meet the biologists and managers of the refuge. The National Wildlife Refuge System story began one hundred years ago in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt learned that brown pelicans and white egrets living on five-acre Pelican Island were being slaughtered for their feathers. Pelican Island was the last breeding ground for brown pelicans along the entire east coast of Florida. Taking action to protect the birds and their habitat, Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing Pelican Island as the first national wildlife refuge. Under his leadership, wildlife protection became a national interest, and for the first time, was based upon wildlife's intrinsic worth rather than its utilitarian value. He went on to create 51 more refuges during his presidency, and today the National Wildlife Refuge System is larger in size than the National Park System. It contains more than 540 refuges, 95 million acres, and 35 million annual visitors. And for the American public, a refuge can be found within an hour's drive of every major U.S. city.

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This year, guests on Save the Panther Day will also see the grand opening of the new Panther Glade educational display, a joint effort between Caribbean Gardens and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). The exhibit enables guests to learn about the history of the panther as well as how to help these endangered species both locally and through the efforts of the NWF. Through large, thick glass panels guests will also be able to get nose to nose with the exhibit's cougars – about as closely related to Florida panthers as tigers in India are to tigers in Thailand. Wesley Woolf, an environmental policy specialist with National Wildlife Federation in Atlanta will also be at Panther Glade to speak with guests. His work focuses on Florida Panther recovery and Everglades restoration and related issues.

Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples is nationally accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. Inside the 52-acre zoo and botanical garden, a variety of innovative presentations and activities are offered all day. Small troops of lemurs, apes, and monkeys including the new colobus monkey baby live in natural habitats on the islands visited by guided catamarans on the Primate Expedition Cruise. In addition to the historical plantings dating back to 1919, the garden features a variety of animals from apes to zebras and is the only zoo in Florida to feature all four of Africa's top predators. Located in the heart of Naples at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from Coastland Center, the zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more info, call the Caribbean Gardens ZooLine at (239) 262-5409 or click [www.NaplesZoo.com](http://www.NaplesZoo.com).

### **Quick Facts:**

**Presidential Connections:** The nation's first National Wildlife Refuge was established in Florida by Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was also a visitor to the Orlando area botanical garden of Dr. Henry Nehrling who also founded the botanical garden in 1919 that would become Caribbean Gardens.

#### **Quotes:**

"The natural resources of our country are in danger of exhaustion if we permit the old wasteful methods of exploiting them longer to continue." **President Theodore Roosevelt**, 1903, in a special meeting of the members of Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court justices, and the nation's governors.

"It is high time to protect and preserve what is still left." **Dr. Henry Nehrling**, 1904, founder of the botanical garden at Caribbean Gardens.

**Congress** has declared year 2003 as "The Year of the National Wildlife Refuge" and the President is requested to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to conduct appropriate programs, ceremonies and activities to accomplish the goal of such a year.

**Florida's National Wildlife Refuges:** Because of its critical habitat and resources for migratory birds, Florida offers its people and visitors nearly 30 refuges. There are two National Wildlife Refuges in Collier County. Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1989 and Ten Thousand Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1996.

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**Links:**

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge  
<http://floridapanther.fws.gov/index.html>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Centennial Celebration Media Pages  
<http://refuges100.fws.gov/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service General Site  
<http://www.fws.gov/>

National Wildlife Federation Panther Info  
<http://www.nwf.org/keepthewildalive/panther/>

National Wildlife Federation – Zoo Event to Create Panther Glade  
<http://www.nwf.org/keepthewildalive/panther/pianosforpanthers.cfm>