

Host a Florida Panther Prowl or other Wildlife Birthday Celebration

Host your next Birthday Party and help save the Florida Panther and other wildlife through education and awareness!

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Theme:** Choose an animal or several to connect your activities and decorations. (Panther Prowl, Bear Boggle, Wolf Howl, Fox Frenzy, Eagle Soar, Owl Howl)
- **Location:** Back yard, Local or State Park, Beach, National Wildlife Refuge or area with hiking trails and boardwalks.
- **Invitations:** Create your own or download the panther invitation by
- **Guests:** Let your guests know ahead of time the theme of your party and what they may need to bring or how to dress (make it a costume party and have guests dress as wildlife that live with the panther).
- **Nametags:** Create wildlife nametags and the guests can draw them out of a decorated panther habitat box with wildlife nametags inside or they can create their own nametags as an introductory activity. (*Examples: Black Bear Sarah...White-tailed Deer Sasha*)
- **Food:** Help save our environment with organic grown and fair trade goodies. "Organic agriculture is a holistic system with the primary goal of optimizing the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals, and people. Management practices are carefully selected with intent to restore and then maintain ecological harmony on the farm, its surrounding environment and ultimately the whole planetary ecosystem (www.newmansownorganics.com)." While Organic foods have a higher price, choosing them provides a healthier and more sustainable future for wildlife and their habitats, and humans too.

- **Cake:** Decorate the cake according to your theme. Many bakeries will create a photo image right on the cake.
- **Eco-Friendly Decorations: Go Green!** Decorate with native plants and greenery. Use reusable and recyclable decorations. Create a panther or other wildlife habitat at your location. Decorate with pictures of panthers and other wildlife and their tracks. Hang a sign over the door "Entering Panther Habitat" as the guests arrive. (Use positive information. Never any negative sign stating panthers will attack you. It is important to educate others about the importance that wildlife have in our lives and to not be afraid of them. By building an appreciation for wildlife and native habitats we can work together to provide a sustainable future for all generations of species.
- **Reduce - Reuse - Recycle:** Limit your trash and recycle all aluminum, plastic, glass and paper. Promote sustainable use of materials. Use recycled or reusable plates, cups, and service ware. Place a sign by the plates stating saving the environment for future generations of panthers and people to enjoy them.
- **Favors for the guests to take home:** Use canvas shopping bags and let the guests color or decorate the bags. Encourage parents to make a difference for wildlife and the environment. Purchase reusable drinking bottles that can double as a favor and glass for your guests at the party.

Fun Activities:

- **Wildlife Face Painting** - Face paint each guest with a wildlife species of their choice.
- **Create a wildlife habitat** - Have guests bring a small tree, shrub, or butterfly plant that is native to the area or plants can be supplied by host. A native species is a species that has always lived in the area or region and is from there. Native species are fully adapted to the ecosystem and their environment. An exotic species is a species not from the area or region that was brought by accident or introduced. Exotic species are not adapted to the area and in some cases are damaging to the environment taking over native habitats and making it difficult for native plants and animals to survive. For more information about native and exotic species of Florida

click here. Everyone can help create a native wildlife habitat or butterfly garden. Need: Shovels, water cans, & mulch.

- **Florida Panther "says":** (just like Simon Says) Host or other leader has group line up facing them. Every "Panther Says" direction participants should follow. If a command is given without saying "Panther Says" and participants still follow direction, then they must sit down. ("Panther Says" hop 5 times to the left like a rabbit, "Panther Says" slither like a snake to the back, "Panther Says" fly like an eagle to the front, etc).
- **Trail Walk:** Take a short nature walk with your guests listening and experiencing nature.
- **Trail Bingo:** While on the trail play Bingo. Give each guest a card as they walk on the trail they will need to mark off what they see. They can work individually or in teams. Just like Bingo when they have a five in a row or diagonal they yell "Save Wildlife." Give a prize to the team that completes their card first. Use plants and animals specific to your area.
- **Scent Stations:** Many animals communicate through smell—find a mate, mark their territory, find prey all using their sense of smell. This activity can be done on a trail or in any open area. Set up different scent stations (4-8 in total) with clues on stakes for guests to collect and try to guess what animal they describe. Divide group into teams. Each team will have a specific scent that they will have to smell at the beginning and then have to identify at the different stations, once they identify their scent at each station there will be a clue. Each clue will be a cool fact about different wildlife. Give a prize to the team that guesses their wildlife correctly. Choose different scents (almond, strawberry, flower, vanilla, etc). These scents will be swabbed on cotton and then put in a film canister; you will need 5-9 film canisters for each scent. Choose 4 different wildlife, gather a total of 4-8 clues, write clues out on cardboard, attach clues and the particular scent to stake or chair (all panther clues same scent, all bear clues same scent, etc). Arrange stakes on trail interspersing the different clues. Each team will have to identify their scents and collect their clues. Let them know ahead of time how many different clues they will have to find.

- **Wildlife Art:** Create your own wildlife art. While walking on the trail or searching around the backyard, have guests collect different treasures of nature (leaves, sticks, rocks, etc). Once back from the trail hike or right on the trail or in the backyard have each guest or team create a particular wildlife species with the treasures of nature (wildlife species can be the animal they had to guess as part of the scent station activity). Take photos of end result and send them to "*Wings of Hope*".
- **Sizing up to Wildlife:** Have guests see how they size up to a Florida Panther or other wildlife species (Eagle, Owl, Fox, Manatee, etc.). Mark out the different sizes of animals in the sand, on the ground, on a wall or mat. Have guests lie on ground or against wall and see how tall they are in comparison with the particular animal. All you need is a measuring tape and sizes of animals.
- **How far can you leap?** Have guests compare how far they can leap in comparison to different wildlife species. Panthers can leap 15 feet.
- **"Pennies for Panthers":** Create a container for guests to donate funds to help save the Florida panther or any wildlife species that represents your celebration. Let guests know in advance about the donation. The Panther Posse schools in Southwest Florida collect "Pennies for Panthers" which are donated to the:
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission/Panther Team
<http://myfwc.com/panther/>

Other donation ideas:

- Funds to help injured Florida panthers, orphaned kittens and Panther research.
- Or funds to help support local native wildlife or plant organizations.
- Wildlife Foundation of Florida
<http://wildlifefoundationofflorida.com/>
<http://www.myfwc.com/panther/fund.html>

Have a wonderful Birthday Celebration "building bridges of hope for wildlife and the environment with fun"!!!