

# Critical Thinking

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## A Struggle to Survive

While watching the nightly news, you hear this report:

**Rosa:** Bob Wilder has an update on Florida's state mammal, the endangered Florida panther.

**Bob:** Rosa, at one time there were as few as 30 to 50 adult panthers in the state. Their numbers are no longer dropping, but the panthers still face many problems, such as being hit by cars and losing their habitat to development. As the habitat has gotten smaller, Florida panthers have become separated from other panther populations. As a result the gene pool is shrinking, and their health problems have increased.

**Rosa:** What is being done about the problem, Bob?

**Bob:** One recent plan involved moving a few Texas panthers into the Florida panther range. The Texas and Florida packs actually shared the range long ago. We know that members of these two groups have bred successfully. The crossbred cubs will have a reduced chance of inheriting health problems often suffered by Florida panthers. The Texas panthers will increase the gene pool, which scientists hope will improve the health of panthers in Florida.

### USEFUL TERMS

**gene pool** the total number of genes in a population at any one time

**range** the region to which a plant or animal is native

**crossbred bred** from different varieties or breeds

**niche** the role of an organism in a community

### PREDICTING CONSEQUENCES

1. How might the addition of Texas panthers affect the Florida panther's niche?

### HELPFUL HINT

Think about the behavior of panthers in terms of territory, mating, and prey.

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**Critical Thinking *continued***

**DEMONSTRATING REASONED JUDGMENT**

2. Why do you think activists chose to release a population that once shared a part of the Florida panther's range?

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3. Why is it important to keep the numbers of individuals in an endangered population from dropping too low?

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**BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS**

4. Biologists have already tried many solutions to the panther problem. Here is your chance to think like a biologist. The left column of the chart contains problems that Florida panthers face. Brainstorm two solutions for each problem, and write the solutions in the right column.

**Florida Panther Solutions**

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Possible solutions</b>
habitat loss	
pollution	
collisions with automobiles	