

*Jack Kaufman gives the true meaning of “Endangered” in relation to the Florida Panther*

Interviewer: You’ve been remarkably persistent and now on the panther project which, from what you’re saying, you also expect...are pessimistic about.

Jack Kaufman: The chances of saving the panther are small but, while there’s any chance at all, it’s worth pursuing. The population is down, simply now, so low and the pressure is on its last remaining breeding habitat are so great that the odds against saving the species, and it doesn’t mean just trying to preserve the last twenty or fifty that are left, but, if the species are going to be saved we have to increase the population. It is not at a viable level now. It has to be increased. And, to increase this to what would be a long term survival situation is going to be very extremely difficult.

Interviewer: Jack, there be some people that would say that the amount of effort it would take, the amount of money it would take, to save those few remaining panthers or to increase the population is really not worth it, that we should put our money and our effort into other areas. Why do you think it’s important to save panthers or any animal?

Jack: Well, I think this is, it’s part of our natural environment, and which is our own life support system and I think if we give up at any point on any part of our natural environment on trying to save and protect our natural environment, we’re really giving up on our own future, as well, because we, like the animals we are trying to save, depend on the same resources, on water and on land, and these endangered species are not so important simply because we would lose one more species, not that that species is that important in itself, but each of these endangered species is a symbol and a warning sign for what we’re doing to our entire environment. And, each endangered species that we lose is one more signpost down the road of what we’re losing and so we have to fight it every step of the way to try to hold back this tide of destruction of the natural environment. And, endangered species are simply a very visible sort of symbolic representation of what we are losing all over the world, all the time. That’s why the endangered species effort is so important is to draw attention to the resources on which those species depend and what every other species depend, including ourselves.

Interviewer: And so, in essence, you are saying the struggle should begin right here, right in our back yard.

Jack: We can't afford to lose anymore. Right. We can't afford to lose anymore anywhere. And so, we have to fight this battle as hard as we can, to try to slow down this onrushing tide of environmental destruction, which is the root problem, of course, is the human population increase and as long as the human population continues to increase at the rate it is now, worldwide, we're really fighting a losing battle, delaying battle, delaying tactics.

Interpreter: Do you expect to stay involved in FDE?

Jack: As long as I'm in Florida, certainly.