



## Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine

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Volume 3 *Portals*

Article 26

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5-1-1996

### Going, Going, Gone

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#### Recommended Citation

Seider, Jonas (1996) "Going, Going, Gone," *Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine*: Vol. 3, Article 26.  
Available at: [http://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool\\_litmag/vol3/iss1/26](http://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool_litmag/vol3/iss1/26)

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## Going, Going, Gone

*Jonas Seider*

Look at me! Take a real long look. Study my features and try to commit them to memory. Record my vital statistics. Examine my natural habitat. Learn what I eat and when I sleep, how I look and how I play. I beg you, learn all about me because I may soon be gone forever.

I am the Florida panther. That makes me one of the nine hundred most endangered species in the United States. As of 1994, there were only thirty to fifty panthers left. THEY call it progress and growth. THEIR progress and growth have invaded my home. With no place to live, I have no place to thrive. Therefore, to me it is neither progress nor growth; it is simply stagnation and death. The catch phrase is "agricultural expansion." This means that in order to grow food for themselves, THEY are eradicating me. How can THEY be so heartless?

My ancestors once flourished throughout the Southeast. Now our meager numbers exist only in the Big Cypress Swamp and the Florida Everglades. It can be only greed that drives them to overtake my home. Unfortunately, my physical grace and beauty have no bearing on my survival.

There may be one hope for me. A captive breeding program was begun in 1991. I keep my paws crossed that this program will be successful and I will be saved. I can't fight THEM. THEIR numbers are too great and THEY are too strong.

Therefore, look at me, and contemplate that soon I may be gone. I may be reduced to that category called extinct animals. Perhaps I may one day be only a picture in an encyclopedia. Look at me. Please look at me now because you may never see me again.