IDENTIFICATION NOTES
for wildlife law enforcement

PROBLEM: How to differentiate pelts of three species of small spotted cats commonly seen in the fur trade.

Terms to know:

- **whorls** - Area where hair changes direction (usually near the shoulders), creating a swirled patch of hairs; like a "cowlick"

- **rosettes** - Color pattern consisting of dark ring-shaped marks surrounding a patch of color that differs from the background color of the pelt

- **chevron** - Triangular shaped spot

- **flanks** - Body region between last rib and base of tail; includes the hip

- **plaques** - Portions of processed hides, usually rectangular and cut from the dorsum (back); fur coats are fashioned from plaques

Note: Plaques may not include typical orientation features (e.g., face, legs, and tail) found on a whole hide. Orientation of the features on the plaque, therefore, must be recognized from remaining pelage patterns such as neck stripes, white on undersides, change of hair direction, etc.

Margay - *Leopardus wiedii* Mexico, Central and South America

- whorls located behind or even with armpits (*position circled*)

- flanks with rosettes

- tail, if present, is ringed unevenly and long enough to reach shoulders

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Ocelot - (Leopardus pardalis) Mexico, Central and South America
- whorls located mid-shoulders or toward neck (position circled)
- flanks with rosettes
- tail ringed unevenly, and too short to reach shoulders

Leopard Cat - (Prionailurus bengalensis) India, China, Southeast Asia
- whorls absent; hair unidirectional towards flanks
- flanks with chevrons or triple-spot groupings that point toward tail
- tail with 7 - 12 rings, if complete (unbroken)

[The use of this IDNote is not recommended without demonstration by an expert. This demonstration should include information on variable color patterns, similar species, and effects of mechanical damage.]