



News Release

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www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa

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Young Ocelot Discovered at Refuge

Rio Hondo, TX - While doing research on ocelot movements for her master's thesis, University of Texas at Brownsville graduate student, Sarah Nordlof, made a significant discovery. While checking pictures taken by motion-sensored trail cameras, Nordlof noticed two ocelots in the same picture. Although the photos were a bit blurry, it was clear that one ocelot was significantly smaller than the other, strongly suggesting it was a mother and her offspring. The gender of the new juvenile is not yet known, but its age is roughly estimated to be between 8 and 12 months.

The trail camera was located on Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge (LANWR), east of Harlingen, TX. After the deaths of two male ocelots, the known ocelot population at the refuge had dropped to 11 individuals in the last year. The discovery of the new, young ocelot brings the population up to 12. With such a critically small population in south Texas, the addition of a new individual is significant for ocelot population recovery.

Although habitat loss is the primary reason ocelots have become an endangered species in south Texas, deaths by vehicles as ocelots attempt to cross roads has become the main cause of their mortality in recent years. Nordlof's research results will assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service when consulting with transportation agencies in the placement of wildlife crossings.

Fortunately, plans are underway to create up to 15 wildlife crossings under roads within the habitat range of ocelots in deep south Texas to help get them safely from one side of the road to the other. Two crossings will be on refuge land as part of the renovation of the popular Bayside Drive tour route. Construction is expected to be completed by late 2016. FM 106, the road leading to Laguna Atascosa NWR, will have eight wildlife crossings when it undergoes construction starting in 2015. In addition, State Highway 100, where the two most recent ocelot deaths have been recorded, will have four to five wildlife crossings, with construction beginning in 2015.

To learn more about ocelots in south Texas, visit the refuge's website

www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa.

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