



News Release

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www.fws.gov/refuge/laquna_atascosa

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Second Young Ocelot Discovered at Refuge

Rio Hondo, TX – Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, in Cameron County, Texas, recently identified a previously unknown juvenile ocelot. It was discovered in a photograph from mid-December taken by one of the motion triggered cameras the refuge uses to monitor these critically endangered wild cats. The juvenile was first photographed climbing a tree behind its mother and then walking next to her in subsequent photos. The ocelot's gender is unknown, but it is estimated to be 8-12 months old and appears to be in good health. It is the second young ocelot discovered at the refuge in recent months. In late fall of 2014, another young cat was photographed following its mother in a different area of the refuge.

The new juvenile increases the known population of ocelots on the refuge to 13. There are only two known breeding populations of ocelots remaining in the United States, this one in Cameron County and another in Willacy County, which has 34 known ocelots. Biologists do not have evidence that these two isolated populations currently interact, which leads to concerns about inbreeding. The success of ocelot recovery depends, in part, on reconnecting habitat between these two populations.

Ocelots require dense thornscrub habitat. Private landowners play an important role in ocelot conservation by partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through conservation easements. Land in a conservation easement remains in the landowner's hands, but protects habitat for the endangered ocelot and other species that need thornscrub, such as green jays and Texas indigo snakes. If landowners are interested in learning more about conservation easements, they can contact Refuge Manager, Boyd Blihovde, at 956-748-3608.

The public plays an important role in keeping this endangered wild cat in the Rio Grande Valley through awareness, land management, and reporting sightings. The public is encouraged to report any possible sightings of live or dead ocelots to the refuge by calling 956-748-3608, or after hours 956-784-7520. To learn more about ocelots in south Texas, visit the refuge's website www.fws.gov/refuge/laquna_atascosa.

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