



News Release

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Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)

www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa

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Ocelot Kitten Confirmed to be Female

Rio Hondo, TX - Wildlife biologists recently trapped an ocelot kitten at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, just east of Rio Hondo, Texas. The kitten was first discovered in early March in trail camera photos taken in mid-February. At the time, biologists could not be certain of the kitten's gender, but trapping it allowed them to check the gender and re-evaluate its age. Ocelot biologist, Hilary Swarts, can now confirm that the kitten is approximately 10-12 months old, and is a healthy female. She was fitted with a small radio collar and her movements will be tracked as part of the ongoing monitoring of ocelots in and around the refuge. So far, monitoring indicates that she has remained in the general area where she was photographed and trapped.

Of the twelve identified ocelots at the refuge, the discovery of this kitten brings the number of females to five. The other four females are of breeding age. Therefore, biologists are hopeful the population will continue to increase over the next several years. Planning is underway to bring an adult female ocelot from Mexico to the refuge within the next year. Wildlife biologists are also continuing to increase habitat for ocelots by planting native thornscrub seedlings on land formerly cleared for agriculture. In the event that ocelots leave the refuge in search of habitat or mates, FM106 is soon to undergo major construction which will include 8 wildlife crossings. These crossings, or underpasses, will allow ocelots and other wildlife to safely cross under roads and prevent deaths from vehicles, as well as protect the safety of drivers. To learn more about ocelots in south Texas, visit the refuge's website www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa.

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