U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pocket Guide to Ocelots

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

Pocket Guide to Ocelots

Distinguishing characteristics

- Medium sized cat (15—30 lbs) with distinct black bordered markings.
- Long, ringed tail that is nearly one-third the length of its body.
- Slightly rounded ears.
- Prefers dense brush, where it hunts for birds, snakes and rodents.

Endangered

Ocelots used to be found from South Texas up into Arkansas and Louisiana. Today, there are less than 50 ocelots left in the U.S. and all are found in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

Bobcats

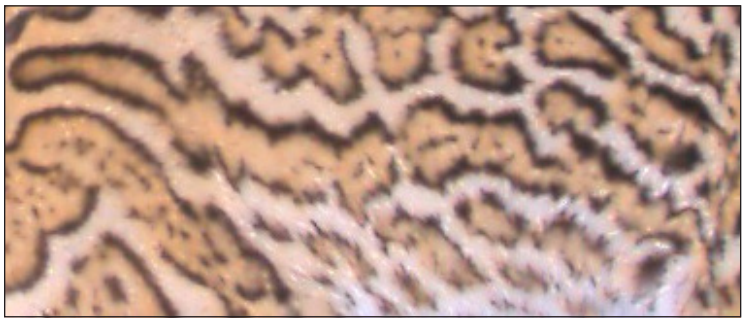
Distinguishing characteristics:

- Light brown to gray coat. Might have spots on coat but they are more subtle.

- Short tail with white tip.
- Ears are more pointed than ocelot with tuft of hair at tip.
- Often have cheek tufts.
- Larger than an ocelot.
- Found in various habitat types, including forest, coastal, wetlands, as well as near urban areas.
- Common throughout the United States.

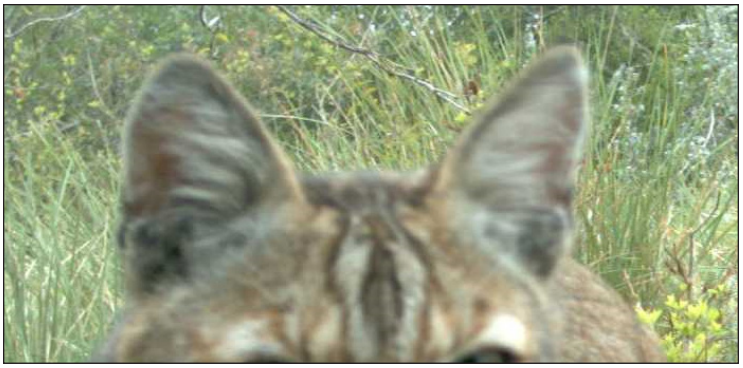
How to tell an ocelot from a bobcat

Ocelot



Bobcat

The ocelot coat has a chain-like pattern of dark bordered spots. The bobcat coat has smaller, more muted spots.



The ocelot has rounded ears. The bobcat has pointed ears.

What to do if you see an ocelot (alive *or* dead)

Immediately contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
956/784-7520 — 956/748-3607 — 956/784-7500

Provide important information, including

Your name and a phone number where you can be reached; location, time and type of sighting (alive or dead); identifying marks that confirm it was an ocelot and not a bobcat; directions on how to get to the location; and a detailed description of the area.

If you find a dead ocelot

If you can, please stay with the carcass until USFWS staff arrive. If you are not able to stay, please move the carcass so that it is not visible to passersby and USFWS can retrieve. Be sure to let USFWS know exactly where to find the carcass so they can retrieve it and collect important information such as internal tags and genetics.