

OCELOTS ONCE RANGED IN THE U.S.

throughout portions of the Southwest and into areas as far east and north as Arkansas and Louisiana. In the 20th century, loss of habitat, predator eradication efforts and voracious demand from the fur and pet trades severely impacted ocelot populations throughout the Western Hemisphere. Today, the only surviving breeding population in the U.S. is in Texas, where fewer than 60 ocelots remain in two small populations 20 miles apart near the Mexican border. Occasionally, dispersing male ocelots from Mexico appear in the borderlands of southern Arizona.



A medium-size wildcat, the ocelot has a distinct black-outlined “chain rosette” spotted coat, a long ringed tail and slightly rounded ears.

Basic Facts

- Throughout their range ocelots prefer heavily vegetated habitat, from tropical and subtropical rainforests in Central and South America to thornscrub in Texas and northern Mexico.
- Dense vegetation affords ocelots the protection they need for cover, hunting, denning, breeding and rearing young.
- The spotted coat of an ocelot replicates the dappling effect of sunlight through foliage, allowing the cat to move through brush undetected.
- Ocelots are opportunistic hunters and eat a variety of animals, including rodents, rabbits, young deer, birds, snakes, lizards and fish.
- Ocelots are not known to prey on livestock.

Threats to Survival

- Ocelots are impacted by habitat loss and fragmentation, vehicle strikes, the illegal fur and pet trades, and unintentional poisoning from prey contaminated by rodenticides and lead shot.

- In the U.S., the biggest threat to ocelots is the loss of their habitat to expanding agricultural lands, urbanization and roads.
- Other development, like the proposed liquid natural gas facilities along the Gulf Coast and new wall construction along the Mexican border, would create additional disturbances and barriers forever blocking U.S. ocelots from breeding with ocelots in Mexico.

What Defenders Is Doing

- Fighting to maintain the Endangered Species Act and other protections for ocelots and other imperiled wildlife.
- Organizing education, outreach and conservation activities in the Rio Grande Valley and throughout the state to ensure that ocelots can coexist alongside human communities.
- Collaborating with private, state and federal partners to improve, expand and protect the habitat necessary to ensure the ocelot’s future in Texas.
- Raising public awareness of ocelots in South Texas, including the threats they face and best practices for protecting and coexisting with them.

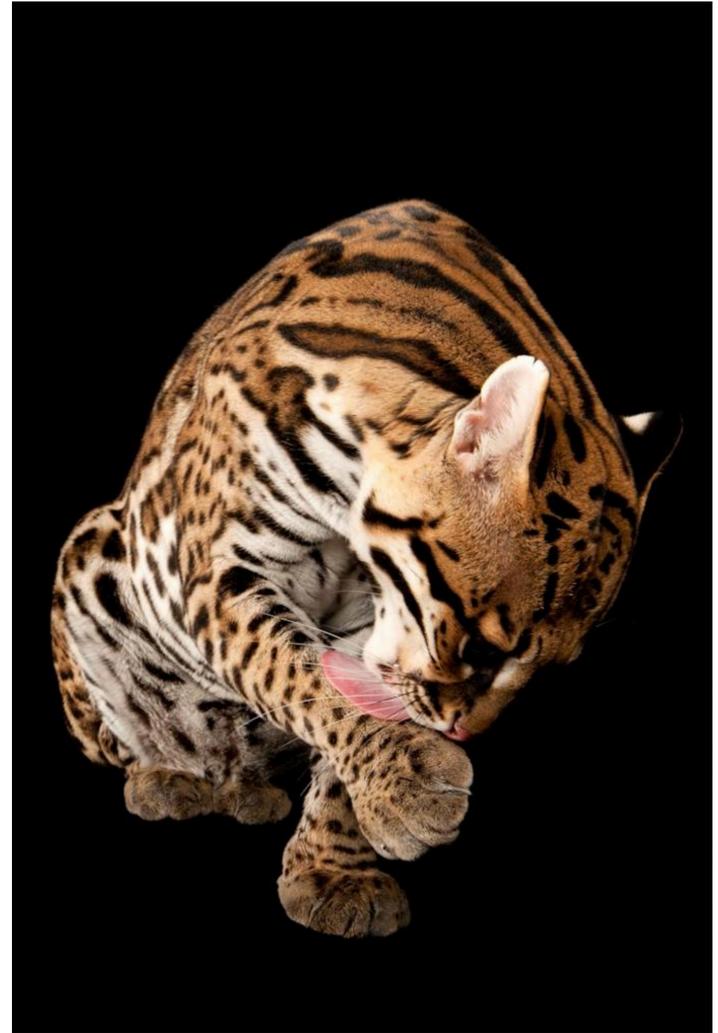


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Efforts to protect ocelots include placing warning signs at known ocelot crossings to prevent deadly collisions with vehicles and tracking individuals fitted with radio collars—like this one caught by a motion-activated camera—to learn more about ocelot movements and habitat requirements.



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What You Can Do

- Help Defenders raise awareness of the ocelot's presence in Texas.
- Follow us on social media and share ocelot-related content and actions with your friends and followers.
- Speak up for ocelots and continued support of the Endangered Species Act and other protections for imperiled wildlife.
- Advocate for better road planning and wildlife crossings on Texas roads.
- Support efforts to protect private, state and federal lands that are prime habitat for ocelots.
- Raise your voice against liquid natural gas development and the expansion of the border wall in South Texas.

If you live in ocelot country:

- Slow down and watch the roads for ocelots.
- Encourage poison-free rodent control techniques in your community.
- Encourage hunters to use lead-free, nontoxic ammunition.
- Adopt “Leave No Trace” ethics and organize clean-up activities in South Texas.
- Support and participate in thornscrub restoration planting days.



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