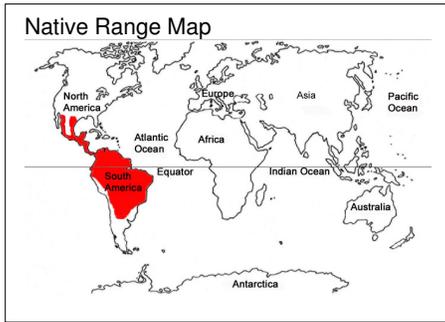


# Ocelot



Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Carnivora  
Family: Felidae  
Genus: *Leopardus*  
Species: *pardalis*



Photo courtesy of Mike Dulaney, Cincinnati Zoo

## Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Ocelots can be found from Arizona and southwestern Texas to every country south except Chile. They have very diverse habitats including rain forest, montane forest, thick bush, semi-deserts, coastal marshes and along river banks. Their main habitat requirement is the presence of dense cover. They are rarely found in open country.
- **Exhibit Location:** Adaptations

## Characteristics

- Height: 16-20 inches; Weight: 15-35 pounds; Length: 26-40 inches; Tail length: 10-20 inches
- The ocelot, a larger member of the small cat group, is a beautiful spotted cat with short hair. Its body coloration ranges from tawny to reddish-brown.
- They have black markings – spots, stripes along their sides and faces, and rosettes on their back. A key feature is the parallel stripes running down the nape of the neck. The underparts are white, spotted with black. The long tail is ringed or marked with dark bars on the upper surface. The backs of the rounded ears are black with a light colored central spot. They have a stripe extending from the inside corner of their eyes and over the back of their head.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 7-10 years; **In Captivity** 20 years

## Behaviors

- Ocelots are nocturnal and are solitary, except when breeding.
- They are agile climbers and may rest in the hollow of a tree during the heat of the day. They also swim very well.
- They are territorial; a male's territory often overlaps with one or more females' territories. A female's territory can be as large as 9 sq. miles and a male's territory as large as 25 sq. miles. They scent mark boundaries by spraying urine, leaving feces in prominent places, and raking the ground with their hind feet.
- Most ocelots have 2 basic prey catching strategies: the "Hunting Walk," where the cat moves, spies (catches sight of) prey, stops, stalks and then pounces and; the "Sit and Wait," where the ocelot may sit for 30 minutes or more than an hour waiting for prey to appear.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** Quail, mice toys and scents.

## Reproduction

- The minimum breeding age for females is 18 months, with a maximum of around 13 years. Males mature at approximately 30 months, with a maximum breeding age of about 15 years.
- Females use scent markings and vocalizations such as meows and yowls to let the male know she's ready to mate. The estrus period (time when the female is most receptive to mating) lasts between 3-10 days. The breeding season varies by region.
- The gestation period is 70-82 days. The female prepares the "den" in thick brush or dense bunchgrass areas surrounded by brush. The den is often a slight depression with the dead leaves and mulch scraped away.
- Litter sizes are usually 1 or 2 kittens that weigh about 8.5 ounces at birth.

- The female ocelot goes off to hunt during the night but stays with the kittens during the day. The kittens begin to accompany her on hunts at about 3 months old. They stay with the mother until they are between 1 and 2 years of age.

### Diet

- **In the Wild:** small to medium-sized mammals (such as agoutis, pacas, monkeys, armadillos, young peccaries), birds, amphibians, fish, reptiles (such as snakes, small turtles, crocodilians)
- **At the Zoo:** Carnivore diet

### Conservation Status

- **IUCN Status:** Least Concern; **CITES:** Appendix I
- The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Federation has the ocelot listed as endangered. Only a small remnant population of the ocelot is found north of the Rio Grande in the United States.
- The major threats to *Leopardus pardalis* currently are deforestation and habitat loss. In the past, they were hunted for their fur. Thirteen ocelots were killed to make 1 fur coat.
- There are many efforts being made internationally to protect the ocelot. In Brazil, for example, the government is working with conservation professionals to create a greenway that will connect the groups of cats in different areas, preventing genetic islands from forming. In the U.S., many zoos and private owners are participating in breeding programs designed to maintain the healthiest gene pool possible. Researchers in the U.S. are working with their counterparts in Brazil to establish a cryogenic (frozen) bank of sperm and eggs and to explore the possibilities of embryo transplantation.
- Predators: humans

### Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- In low light conditions, the ocelot's eyesight is 6 times better than man's.
- The ocelot is the only small cat that sleeps lying down with its forepaws outstretched in front with its head resting on them like a dog.

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