

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The Ocelot



Photo: USFWS

NO NINE LIVES FOR THIS CAT

The Ocelot is down to a mere 50 animals in the U.S. portion of its original range, which includes Texas and Arizona. Those 50 cats are now found in just two populations in Texas, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes are declining. This is particularly concerning given that Ocelots in the U.S. have been listed under the Endangered Species Act since 1982. When first granted federal protection, brush clearing and agriculture were considered primary threats. Now, burgeoning human populations, and accompanying development and road proliferation are also posing acute dangers to the future of this wild cat.

PROTECTING OCELOT TERRITORY

The single-most important measure to help the Ocelot is protection of its habitat. The Ocelot requires dense stands of thorny shrubs and as few roads as possible, given its susceptibility to being killed by cars. Over 90 percent of the Ocelot's preferred habitat type in Texas has been lost. The remaining habitat, including that found on federal wildlife refuges, should be safeguarded and expanded through habitat restoration, which would benefit not only the Ocelot but other wildlife species dependent on thornscrub habitat.

KNOW YOUR WILDCAT

- **American Beauty:** found only in the Americas, the Ocelot is strikingly beautiful. Its fur has a creamy or tawny background, with dark stripes and spots. It weighs 15-30 pounds.
- **A Carnivore of Course:** the Ocelot primarily eats small birds and mammals but will also eat reptiles and fish, and even invertebrates. Bigger predators – including dogs – can kill Ocelots.
- **Refuge on a Refuge:** the largest remaining population of Ocelots in the U.S. is on the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. The Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge also hosts Ocelots. Private lands provide important Ocelot habitat as well.

CLIMATE CHAOS

More frequent and extreme weather events, including extended droughts, tropical storms, and hurricanes all threaten the Ocelot.

