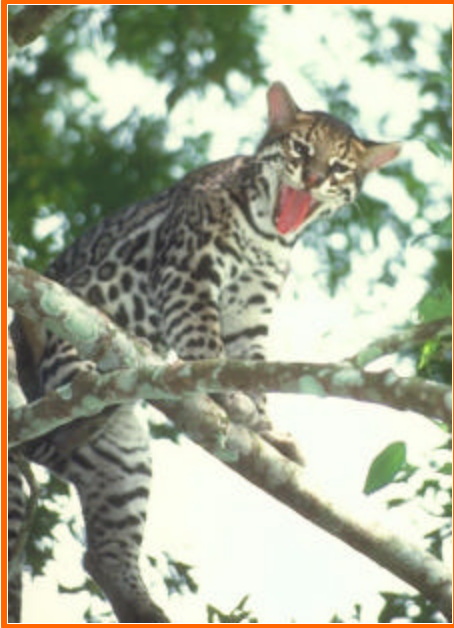


## OCELOT

*Felis pardalis*

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### **Anatomy –**

Measuring up to four feet long, ocelots are about twice the size and weight of ordinary house cats. Female ocelots are slightly smaller than the male usually growing to 2½ feet in length. She carries a litter of two kittens and parents them for a year. Males do not share in the parental responsibilities. The ocelot's buff to sandy brown colored coat is covered in a mixture of black spots and small rosettes with distinct markings around the mouth and eyes. Its underbelly is light with black spots and its 14-inch long tail is covered in dark spots.

### **Habitat –**

The ocelot's main requirement for survival is a dense cover for living space. This cover can vary from arid scrub to tropical forest. This flexibility makes it possible for ocelots to populate an area from southern Texas through Central and South America. Ocelots are terrestrial and mostly nocturnal. They tend to sleep hidden in thick vegetation on the ground, but may climb trees during the day to rest. Males and females will sometimes share a territory, which may be up to 3 square miles in area.

### **Diet –**

Being nocturnal, Ocelots hunt at night with varying techniques. Because they swim well, they will often hunt for fish. As occasional climbers, they will catch birds. Small rodents, rabbits, opossum and iguanas are also main prey for the terrestrial ocelot. The female ocelot's range is about 1½ mile, while the male's can be up to 11 miles.

### **Threats –**

Ocelots have been hunted since the ancient Aztec civilization. The highly prized, distinctive coat of the ocelot is an incentive to poachers. Their numbers continue to diminish today because along with fur hunting, ocelots are being trapped for the exotic pet trade. Deforestation combined with direct human threats put the ocelot on the endangered species list in 1972.



### **Sources:**

Big Cats Online ([www.pace.dial.pipex.com](http://www.pace.dial.pipex.com))

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