



NEWS RELEASE
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Rare tropical wild cat found alive in Arizona:
Sky Island Alliance, Patagonia, and Freedom to Roam in partnership document first live ocelot in Arizona

April 21, 2010. Tucson, ARIZ – Remote cameras captured the image of an **ocelot**, a rare tropical cat, in **Cochise County**, Arizona. Sky Island Alliance, a Tucson-based regional conservation organization, recently photographed the cat while participating in the Witness for Wildlife program, which is supported by the Freedom to Roam Coalition and Patagonia, the outdoor clothing company.

Sky Island Alliance sets remote cameras to unobtrusively observe wildlife and assess wildlife corridors in Arizona's Sky Island region. Last week, Sky Island Alliance volunteer citizen naturalists participating in the Witness for Wildlife program retrieved images from one of the remote cameras in Cochise County. The image of the ocelot was dated November 7, 2009.

Taken by a remote camera, this remarkable photograph is **the first verifiable record** of this elusive wild feline alive in Arizona. Although a small number of ocelots live in south Texas, **ocelots have never before been recorded alive in Arizona**. Additionally, this record from Arizona places ocelots over 200 miles north in latitude from where they are found in Texas.

About the Photograph

The ocelot pictured in the remote camera image was independently identified by five wildlife biologists and mammal specialists. "The animal is clearly a feline, and shows the rosettes and distinctive stripes along the neck that differentiate ocelots from other medium-sized cats," said

Sky Island Alliance biologist Sergio Avila. “Gender and age are harder to determine due to motion blur, but photographs of other known species in the same location help us compare body proportions and size which confirm this is an ocelot.”

About the Ocelot

These medium-sized tropical cats have long tails and agile bodies, weighing about 20 to 35 pounds. Their tan-brown fur is darkly spotted with distinguishing parallel black stripes on the forehead, neck and shoulder. Ocelots hunt mostly at night and eat small rodents, birds and lizards. The ocelot was listed in the U.S. as a federally endangered species in 1982. Fossil records of ocelots in Arizona date back 10,000 years, but more recent historic records are rare and primarily evidenced by pelts.

“From an ecological standpoint, this is an extension of the ocelot’s range,” said Sky Island Alliance biologist Jessica Lamberton. “That an ocelot is here in Arizona tells us that the habitat is healthy, and the connection between healthy landscapes is still a possibility for ocelots and other species. This ocelot, alive in Southern Arizona, is so exciting to see, to take pride in. We now know that these incredibly rare cats are here with us, can co-exist with us, and have done so right under our noses.”

After learning about the news, Dan Shepherd, Director of the Witness for Wildlife program stated that “This is what our program is all about – by engaging conservation professionals and citizen naturalists, together we can provide field data, like these ocelot images, that are critical to helping protect and reconnect wild landscapes giving wildlife and people the freedom to roam.”

About the Sky Islands

The Sky Island region of southwest United States and northwest Mexico is comprised of mountain “islands” separated by desert and grassland valleys. This biologically diverse region is a unique blend of temperate and tropical biological zones and species. The Sky Islands are home to four of the world’s 32 species of wild cats – jaguar, puma, bobcat and ocelot. **With the discovery of an ocelot living in Cochise County, now Arizona can call itself home to all four species of Sky Island wild cats.**

Sky Island Alliance has documented ocelots in northern Sonora, Mexico for the last three years in partnership with a local rancher, and in January 2010 successfully photographed a jaguar in the same area. Although politically divided by an international boundary, this area is biologically connected to the region in the U.S. where the Arizona ocelot has been discovered. For ocelots to continue to live in the Sky Island region, wildlife migration corridors that link important habitat areas between Mexico and the United States must be protected.

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Sky Island Alliance is a grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the rich natural heritage of native species and habitats in the Sky Island region of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. Sky Island Alliance works with volunteers, scientists, land owners, public officials, and government agencies to establish protected areas, restore healthy landscapes, and promote public appreciation of the region's

unique biological diversity.

Patagonia, Inc. is a founding member of the **Freedom to Roam Coalition**, a non-profit initiative that brings together people, organizations and businesses to preserve and protect wildlife corridors and landscape connectivity across North America. **Witness for Wildlife**, a program of Freedom to Roam, is a volunteer citizen naturalist community dedicated to documenting and protecting North America's wildlife corridors.

For additional information about Sky Island Alliance, its programs, and how to join please visit www.skyislandalliance.org.

Learn more about Freedom to Roam and Witness for Wildlife, and how to participate: www.FreedomToRoam.org; www.Patagonia.com/FTR; or www.WitnessforWildlife.org.



Photo: The ocelot recently photographed in Cochise County, Arizona.
Photo credit: 2009 Sky Island Alliance.



Photo: An ocelot photographed in northern Mexico, in an area biologically connected to the region in the U.S. where the Arizona ocelot has been discovered. Photo credit: 2008 Sky Island Alliance and Rancho el Aribabi.

NOTE TO EDITOR:

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