OCELOT (*LEOPARDUS PARDALIS*): AN ADDITION TO THE MAMMALS OF CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO

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ABSTRACT.—We present the first documented record of an ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*) for the Mexican state of Chihuahua. The animal was camera-trapped in open oak woodland. This finding increases the number of mammal species present in the northern Sierra Madre Occidental and reinforces the need for continuing surveys in the barrancas region of Chihuahua.

RESUMEN.—Documentamos el primer registro de ocelote (*Leopardus pardalis*) para el Estado de Chihuahua, México asociado a un bosque abierto de encinos, incrementando el número de especies presente en el norte de la Sierra Madre Occidental, fortaleciendo la necesidad de continuar la búsqueda de estas especies en la región de las barrancas.

The ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*) is a medium-sized neotropical felid that is traditionally associated with tropical environments (Caso et al. 2008). It is considered the most common neotropical felid in Mexico and has a known distribution encompassing the Mexican Pacific coastal states from northern Sonora into Central America and areas along the Gulf coast from southern Texas to the border of Guatemala (Caso et al. 2008). With the advent of recent technological advances, namely camera trapping, new distributional records for the ocelot have been documented in Mexico, such as those for Aguascalientes (Valdez-Jiménez et al. 2013) and Guanajuato (Iglesias et al. 2008). We report the first record of an ocelot for the state of Chihuahua, Mexico.

In 2013, during multiple camera-trap surveys to assess mammalian diversity in the Sierra Madre Occidental of Chihuahua, we documented the presence of a male ocelot from 3 cameras over a period of 12 days. The first documented event took place on 21 September at 03:39 (UTM: zone 13, 759111 N, 3373228 E); the second event took place on 3 October at 03:34 (UTM: zone 13, 763051 N, 3372503 E); and the last event occurred on 12 October at 01:08 (UTM: zone 13, 759949 N, 3374308 E) (Fig. 1).

Although we obtained pictures of both a left and a right side of an ocelot, the photographs are not simultaneous and do not have

sufficient clarity to determine if they represent the same individual. Distances between events ranged from 1.21 to 4.91 km; such movement likely represents the same individual. The records are located approximately 35 km W of the city of Nuevo Casas Grandes. The habitat in the area is dominated by open oak woodlands and native grasslands. The records were documented at an average elevation of 1973 m (± 180 m), which is considered high elevation for the species (Moreno Arzate et al. 2011).

Known breeding populations of ocelots are present in the state of Sonora, approximately 110 km SE of the Chihuahuan records (Fig. 2) (López González et al. 2003). There are additional male ocelot records for the state of Sonora (170 km ENE) and Arizona, USA (224 km ENE), but no reproduction has been documented at those sites (Holbrook et al. 2011, Avila-Villegas and Lamberton-Moreno 2012). Ocelots typically disperse 10–15 km (Ludlow and Sunquist 1987, Laack 1991), with 50 km from the original capture site being the longest dispersal distance documented for a male ocelot (Booth-Binczik 2007). Dispersal distances for ocelots in marginal habitats most likely increase as habitats become fragmented and open. So it would not be surprising to have one or more ocelots disperse from a possible source population that is 110 km or more from Sonora (López González et al. 2003).

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Fig. 1. Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*) camera-trap photograph taken in northwestern Chihuahua.

Fig. 2. Geographic location of the ocelot records for Chihuahua in relation to tropical forests and ocelot records in Sonora, Mexico.

Anderson (1972) and López González and García-Mendoza (2012) have proposed the existence of ocelots in Chihuahua based on the presence of tropical habitats, which are mainly in the southern portion of the state. Our record validates the assumed presence of the species for the state; however, our record is associated with temperate biomes that are relatively far from the tropical habitats present in the state. This observation reinforces the need to continue and expand the documentation of mammal occurrences in the barrancas region of Chihuahua. Further documentation will likely reveal small but resilient populations of ocelots and other mammalian species that are currently vulnerable in other parts of their ranges.

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