



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 10, 2014

MEDIA CONTACT:

Kelly Thompson
Marketing & Development Coordinator
Office: 325-437-4692
E-mail: Kelly.thompson@abilenetx.com

New baby ocelot now on exhibit at the Abilene Zoo

ABILENE, TEXAS – The zoo has a new baby ocelot. Born Sept. 9 to proud ocelot parents Hotrod and Ellie, little Lucy is now old enough to be out on exhibit with her mother.

The Abilene Zoo's ocelot breeding program is part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan program, which strives to educate the public about these threatened animals while helping to repopulate the species.

Ocelots, also called dwarf leopards, are small wild cats that live in Central and South America, Mexico and even far South Texas. They were once killed for their beautiful spotted fur, but the species has rebounded to between 800,000 and 1.5 million worldwide. They are, however, endangered in Texas. Only about an estimated 80 to 120 ocelots are found in two isolated populations in southeast Texas.

The father Hotrod is 15 years old, and mother Ellie is 14. Lucy is their third litter together. Ocelot litters tend to range from one to three.

The baby's care has been shared by the zoo keepers and the ocelot mother, a first for Ellie and the zoo. In the past, Ellie's babies exclusively have been hand-raised to help ensure their survival. Lucy is thriving with being both bottle-fed by zoo keepers and cared for by her mother.

"We're lucky that the mother is allowing us to assist in rearing this baby," said Abilene Zoo Mammal Keeper Denise Ibarra. "It's been successful with large cats, but this is rare in the zoo world for smaller cats to share hand-raising with parental care."

About the AZA-Accredited Abilene Zoo: The Abilene Zoo is home to more than 900 animals from 250 species. The Zoo offers many educational programs and kid's activities, including camps, birthday parties and Behind the Scenes Tours.

The Abilene Zoo is open 7 days a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day) from 9 am to 5 pm. Last admittance is 4:30 pm. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$3.50 for children ages 3-12, \$5 for seniors aged 60+. Members are admitted free. Memberships start at \$30. www.abilenezoo.org. 325-676-6085.

###