

Identification Notes for wildlife law enforcement

CATEGORY: MAMMALS

Scientific Names: *Leopardus/ Prionailurus*

Common Names: Margay, Ocelot, Leopard Cat

PROBLEM: How to differentiate pelts of three species of small spotted cats commonly seen in the fur trade.

[Species information and additional excellent illustrations may be found in the CITES Identification Manual Vol. 4: Parts and Derivatives I (1984), edited by Peter Dollinger, and compiled with the advice and guidance of the Identification Manual Committee. Publication sponsored by the United Nations Environment Programme.]

Terms to know:

whorls - Area where hair changes direction (usually near the shoulders), creating a swirled patch of hairs; like a "cowlick"

rosettes - Color pattern consisting of dark ring-shaped marks surrounding a patch of color that differs from the background color of the pelt

chevron - Triangular shaped spot

flanks - Body region between last rib and base of tail; includes the hip

plaques - Portions of processed hides, usually rectangular and cut from the dorsum (back); fur coats are fashioned from plaques

Note: Plaques may not include typical orientation features (e.g., face, legs, and tail) found on a whole hide. Orientation of the features on the plaque, therefore, must be recognized from remaining pelage patterns such as neck stripes, white on undersides, change of hair direction, etc.

Margay - (*Leopardus wiedii*) Mexico, Central and South America

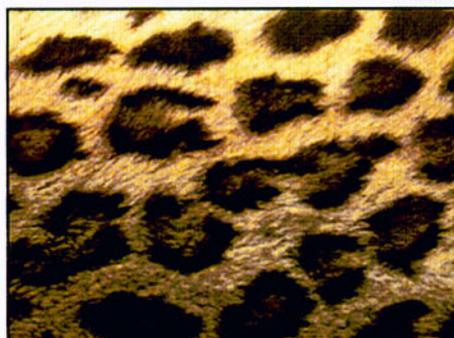
- whorls located behind or even with armpits (*position circled*)
- flanks with rosettes
- tail, if present, is ringed unevenly and long enough to reach shoulders



whorl



flank



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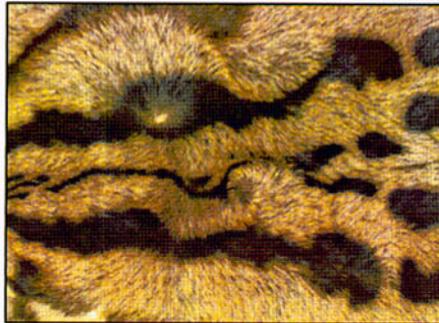
Common Names: Margay, Ocelot, Leopard Cat

Ocelot - (*Leopardus pardalis*) Mexico, Central and South America

- whorls located mid-shoulders or toward neck (*position circled*)
- flanks with rosettes
- tail ringed unevenly, and too short to reach shoulders



whorl



flank



Leopard Cat - (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) India, China, Southeast Asia

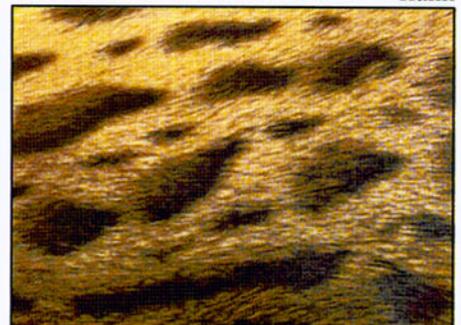
- whorls absent; hair unidirectional towards flanks
- flanks with chevrons or triple-spot groupings that point toward tail
- tail with 7 - 12 rings, if complete (unbroken)



no whorl



flank



[The use of this IDNote is not recommended without demonstration by an expert. This demonstration should include information on variable color patterns, similar species, and effects of mechanical damage.]