First record of *Leopardus pardalis* (Linnaeus, 1758) at the State Park of the Serra do Tabuleiro, Santa Catarina, Brazil

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(With 1 figure)

Popularly known as ocelot, *Leopardus pardalis* (Linné, 1758) are found in all Brazilian regions (Reis et al., 2006), with the exception of the south of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Despite its ample occurrence, estimates of legal protection run as low as 3% to 6% of its original distribution (Nowell e Jackson, 1996).

The State Park of the Serra do Tabuleiro (SPST) is the largest Conservation Unit of Santa Catarina, occupying approximately 1% of the state's territory. Notwithstanding the extensive range of the Park, within 20 years of studies in the area, not one sighting of the species had yet been reported (Graipel et al., 2008). The only evidence of the feline's presence in the surrounding area of the SPST is that of a specimen deposited in the Laboratory of Aquatic Mammals of the Federal University of Santa Catarina in 1973 (UFSC 393). The felid's secretive, solitary, nocturnal behaviour and closed canopy habitat have constituted major hindrances for its recording (Haines et al., 2006).

The aim of this note is to give an account of the first camera-trap record of the *L. pardalis* in the SPST. The study was implemented in the Park area of the municipality of Santo Amaro da Imperatriz, in an area located at 27º 43' S and 48º 49' W. The area is within the Atlantic Forest range (Klein, 1978), with Dense Ombrophylous Forests (Veloso et al., 1991) in various stages of succession. Topography is rolling, with elevations ranging from 220 to 490 m. According to the Köeppen-Geiger classification, the predominant climate in the region is humid mesothermal, with no defined dry season, yet with hot summers (Cfa).

From July 2008 to December 2009, the area was monitored with six Tigrinus® digital camera-traps that sampled three areas in three different successional stages: primary and secondary forests and brush (tropical scrub). Two camera-traps were installed in each sampled area in a transect of 1.5 km, with a minimal distance of 100 m between capture stations.

The camera trapping photograph of the ocelot was obtained in an area of secondary forest (27º 44' 31.9'' S and 48º 48' 21.1'' W) at 0004 AM on October 24th, 2009 (see Figure 1). The shot was of a female ocelot that remained at the locale for five minutes. The absence of further recordings during the period of study suggests a low ocelot population level in the region and highlights the importance for the preservation of the area for the maintenance of this particular population as well as of other species present there.

Records of ocelots in areas of secondary forest demonstrate that the species presents a certain environmental tolerance, adapting to conditions and surroundings in recomposition (Jacob, 2002; Goulart, 2008). The forest in which the individual ocelot was captured has been regenerated since 1947, when the canopy cover was clearcut as a strategy to combat the malaria vector mosquito (Martins, 2001).

The confirmation of surviving specimens of endangered species, such as the ocelot, in the SPST underscores the call for the Park's preservation, which is located in an area of great land speculation. Since the SPST has no management plan

Figure 1. Camera trapped photograph of individual ocelot at the State Park of the Serra do Tabuleiro.

as of yet, the dissemination of the first record of *L. pardalis* for the region, for all intents and purposes, can back up further information for the generation of resources for the environmental awareness of the ecological importance of the park. We must disseminate the biological significance of animals found in the region so that this knowledge may contribute to the implementation of actions that guarantee the preservation of the environmental patrimony.

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