



UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA WILD CAT RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION CENTER

An endangered ocelot wanders through the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson in a wildlife camera photo captured in late July and released on Dec. 23 by the University of Arizona Wild Cat Research and Conservation Center.

New footage of endangered ocelots in Arizona

HENRY BREAD
Arizona Daily Star

The final days of 2025 left wild-life lovers seeing spots.

Remote camera footage released during the last two weeks of the year showed two different endangered ocelots roaming the mountains of Southern Arizona, including an especially unusual sighting in the Santa Rita range south of Tucson.

That rare spotted cat was featured in a photo released on Dec. 23 by the University of Arizona Wild Cat Research and Conservation Center, which operates roughly 100 wildlife cameras from the Baboquivari Mountains on the Tohono O'odham Nation to southwestern New Mexico.

Researcher Susan Malusa, director of the nonprofit center, said the lone picture, captured by one of those motion-activated cameras in late July, represents just the second confirmed ocelot sighting in the Santa Ritas since the late 1800s.

"It's just standing there perfectly for the camera. It's a nice image," Malusa said. "We're very excited about this detection."

Based on an analysis of the cat's spots and other distinctive markings, experts believe it is the same, well-traveled male ocelot that was caught on remote cameras twice in 2024 — first in June in the Atascosa Mountains west of Nogales by researchers from the Phoenix Zoo, then in July in the Whetstone Mountains by the Center for Biological Diversity.

Those mountain ranges are roughly 50 miles apart, with such barriers in between as Interstate 19, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and Arizona Highway 83.

The ocelot eventually made



COURTESY OF JASON MILLER

An ocelot's eyes reflect the light from a remote trail camera in a screenshot from a video captured on Oct. 23 in the Huachuca Mountains by Vail wildlife videographer Jason Miller.

its way to the Santa Ritas, where Malusa said it wandered through an area the center has been monitoring for years in a remote canyon close to available water. For the cat's protection, she declined to reveal the specific location.

A new 'boss?'

Malusa said the center's dedicated team of volunteer researchers is now checking other cameras in the Santa Ritas and elsewhere in hopes of finding other images of the ocelot and maybe some clues about its route between mountain ranges.

"That's part of the work, right? Where are the most likely spots for these (travel) corridors," she said.

They also plan to return to the site where the cat was photographed in search of scat that can be used to analyze the animal's diet and genetics.

The detection comes 12 years after the only other ocelot sighting on record for the Santa Ritas. That individual was documented by the center seven times from 2013 to 2014 and hasn't been seen since.

The other recent footage of an ocelot was recorded in the Huachuca Mountains on Oct. 23 and released on Dec. 28 by Vail wildlife videographer Jason Miller.

It shows a different cat slinking out of the dark and into a forest clearing, its eyes lit up by the light from the motion-activated camera.

At first glance, Miller figured it must be Li'l Jefe, an ocelot that has been living in the Huachucas — and showing up on trail cameras — for so long that conservationists gave it a nickname in 2019.

"I thought it was Li'l Jefe, because that's the only (ocelot)

Please see **OCELOT**, Page A4

Former Sen. Jon Kyl diagnosed with dementia

STEPHANIE MURRAY AND DAN NOWICKI
Arizona Republic

Former U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Arizona, has been diagnosed with dementia and will step back from public life, he said Tuesday.

Kyl, 83, was one of Arizona's most powerful leaders on Capitol Hill for years. He served alongside the late U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, and is respected as a conservative workhorse and a statesman.

"I was blessed to represent the people of Arizona in Congress and to have numerous other opportunities to contribute to the political and civic life of our nation and state," Kyl said in a written statement. "However, the time has come for me to withdraw from public life. I have been diagnosed with a neurological disease manifesting as dementia."

Kyl served four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, from 1987 to 1995, three terms in the U.S. Senate from 1995 to 2013, and made an unexpected four-month Senate comeback in 2018 after McCain's death.

"My family and I now head down a path filled with moments of joy and increasing difficulties. I am grateful beyond expression for their love and support, in these coming days as in all the days of my life," Kyl said.

"Despite this diagnosis, I remain a very fortunate man."

Kyl served in Senate during turbulent time

Kyl's Senate career spanned a turbulent time in American history, including former President Bill Clinton's 1999 Senate impeachment trial, the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the 2008 financial crash.

In late 2007, Kyl was elected by his fellow Republicans to the rank of minority whip, making him the highest-ranking Arizonan on the Hill since Rep. John Rhodes was House Republican leader from 1973 to 1981.

Kyl sat on the influential Senate Finance and Judiciary committees, where he was able to influence tax issues and judicial nominations.

Please see **KYL**, Page A2

2025 was one of three hottest years on record, scientists say

ALEXA ST. JOHN
Associated Press

Climate change worsened by human behavior made 2025 one of the three hottest years on record, scientists said.

It was also the first time that the three-year temperature average broke through the threshold set in the 2015 Paris Agreement of limiting warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) since preindustrial times. Experts say that keeping the Earth below that limit could save lives and prevent catastrophic environmental destruction around the globe.

The analysis from World Weather Attribution researchers, released Tuesday in Europe, came after a year when people around the world were slammed by the dangerous extremes brought on by a warming planet.

Temperatures remained high despite the presence of a La Nina, the occasional natural cooling of Pacific Ocean waters that influences weather worldwide. Researchers cited the continued burning of fossil fuels — oil, gas and coal — that send planet-warming greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

"If we don't stop burning fossil fuels very, very, quickly, very soon, it will be very hard to keep that goal" of warming, Friederike Otto, co-founder of World Weather Attribution and an Imperial College London climate scientist, told The Associated Press. "The science is increasingly clear."

Please see **CLIMATE**, Page A2

POP CULTURE IN 2025

A ring for Taylor, an ill-timed KissCam, and whatever '6-7' means

JOCELYN NOVECK
Associated Press

Dictionaries define things. It's their job. So when dictionary.com pronounced "6-7" as their 2025 word of the year, you'd think they would have, well, defined it.

But no. "We're all still trying to figure out exactly what it means," they told us of this year's "linguistic time capsule."

But that's just how pop

culture works, isn't it? Who's to explain why parents alone in their cars were suddenly singing "up up up" from that "KPop Demon Hunters?" song? Or why, in the Venn diagram of pop culture and zoology, it was the capybara that emerged victorious and beloved? Goodbye, Moo Deng. You're adorable, but so 2024.

Despite our new obsessions,

Please see **POP CULTURE**, Page A5



ASHLEY LANDIS, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift kiss after the AFC Championship NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, in Kansas City, Mo., Jan. 26, 2025.

Subscriber Benefits

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to see all the benefits of being a Star subscriber.



INSIDE TODAY'S STAR

Weather	B6	Obituaries	C4
Bridge	C3	Business	C5
TV	C3	Comics	C7

LEE ENTERPRISES

For home delivery, call 1-800-695-4492
email: circulation@tucson.com

