

The OCELOT, or MEXICAN CAT *.

THE ocelot is an American animal. It is ferocious and carnivorous, and may be ranked with the jaguar and cougar; for it approaches them in magnitude, and resembles them in figure and dispositions. A male and female were brought alive to Paris by M. l'Escot, and

* *Tlacoatzotl*, *Tlaloceotl*. *Catus pardus Mexicanus*; *Herr. anal. Hist. Mexic.* p. 512.

Felis sylvestris Americanus, *virginus*; *Seb. Mus. rom. l. p. 47. tab. 30. fig. 2. and p. 77. tab. 48. fig. 2.*

The Mexican cat has its head, back, upper part of the rump, and tail, of a bright tawny colour. A black stripe extends along the top of the back, from head to tail. From the nostrils to the corners of the eye is a stripe of black, and the forehead is spotted with black. The sides are whitish, marked lengthwise with long stripes of black, hollow and tawny in the middle; in which are sprinkled some small black spots; from the neck towards the shoulder point are others of the same colour, and the rump is marked in the same manner. The legs are whitish, varied with small black spots. The tail is spotted with small black spots near its base, and with larger near the end, which is black; *Pennant's Synops. of Zood.* p. 177.

*Pardalis. Felis cauda elongata, corpore maculis superioribus virgatis, inferioribus orbiculatis. . . habitat in America. Magnitudo melis, supra fuscus, subtus albicans; lineae punctaque nigrae per totum corpus longitudinaliter sparsae; sed pedes et abdomen tantum punctis, latera lineis latioribus albis et fuscis pinguntur. Aures breves margine bifido absque penicillis, pedes 5-4 cauda verticillato variegata proportionem cati. Mylaxes 4 ordinum, in singulo ordine setae 3, five 5, albae, basi nigrae, longitudine capitis; *Lea. Syn. Nat.* p. 62.*

we saw them at the fair of St. Ovide in the month of September 1764. They came from the neighbourhood of Carthagena, and had been carried off from their mother when very young, in the month of October 1763. At the age of three months, they had become so strong and cruel, that they killed and eat a bitch which had been given to them for a nurse. At the age of one year, when we saw them, they were about two feet in length; and it is probable that they had not then acquired above one half or two thirds of their full growth. They were exhibited under the name of the *tiger-cat*; but we have rejected this precarious and compound appellation, because the jaguar, the serval, and the margay or Cayenne cat, were transmitted to us under the same denomination, though each of these animals differ from one another, as well as from the ocelot.

Fabri is the first author who mentions this animal in a distinct manner. He caused the drawings of Recchi to be engraved, and from these drawings, which were coloured, he composed a description of the ocelot. He likewise gives a kind of history of it from the writings and information of Gregoire de Bolivar. I have made these remarks with a view to remove a difficulty which had deceived all the naturalists as well as myself. This difficulty is to ascertain whether the two animals drawn by Recchi, the first under the name of *tlatlaubqui-ocelotl*, and the

the second under that of *tlacoatzotl*, *tlalocelotl*, and afterwards described by Fabri as distinct species, are not the same animal. Though the figures are pretty similar, they were regarded as distinct animals, because their names, and even the descriptions of them, were different. I at that time imagined that the first might be the same with the jaguar, and therefore gave it the Mexican name *tlatlaubqui-ocelotl*, which I now perceive did not belong to it: And, since I had an opportunity of seeing both the male and female, I am persuaded that the two described by Fabri are only the same animal, of which the first is the male and the second the female. Nothing less than an examination of the male and female together could have enabled us to detect this error. Of all spotted animals, the robe of the male ocelot is unquestionably the most beautiful, and the most elegantly variegated*. Even that of the leopard is not to be compared with it for vivacity of colours, and symmetry of design, far less those of the jaguar, panther, and ounce. But, in the female ocelot, the colours are fainter,

* Universum corpus pelchro rostroque subrubet colore, excepto inferiori ventre qui albicat potius; maculis rotarum effigie, nigricantibus omnibus intra suave rubentem colorem, totum ita corpus, pedes et cauda ordine quodam distinguuntur ut elegantem plane hinc animali seu pictam tapetum vel peripetasma impositum crederes: Sunt autem maculae haec in dorso et capite rotundiores majoresque: Versus ventrem vero pedesque oblongiusculae et multo minores; Fabri apud Hernandez. Hist. Mex. p. 498.

and the design more irregular. This remarkable difference deceived Recchi, Fabri*, and others.

When the ocelot has acquired his full growth, he is, according to Bolivar, 'two feet and a half high, and about four feet in length. The tail, though pretty long, touches not the ground, and, of course, exceeds not two feet. He is a very voracious, and, at the same time, a timid animal. He seldom attacks men, and is afraid of dogs. When pursued, he flies to the woods, and climbs a tree, where he remains, in order to sleep, and to watch the passage of cattle or smaller animals, and darts down upon them, whenever they are within his reach. He prefers blood to flesh: Hence he destroys a great number of animals; because, instead of satiating himself by devouring their flesh, he only quenches his thirst by drinking their blood †.'

In

* Si animalis figuram spectemus cum antecedente non nihil corporis delineatio congruit; si colorem et maculas quibus pingitur, plurimum discrepat. In hoc totius color corporis non rubicundus sed obscure cinereus apparet, præter ventrem tamen qui albeat. Maculae nec ordinatæ adeo nec ita rotundæ rufesce telam et figure, sed oblongæ nigricantes omnes, in medio vero albicantes sparguntur; crura non ita fortis, &c.; *ibid.* p. 512.

† Dampier mentions this animal under the name of the tiger-cat. The tiger-cat of the Bay of Camperchy is about the size of a bull-dog. His legs are short, and his body resembles that of a mastiff. But, in the head, hair, and the manner of hunting his prey, he has a great similarity to the tiger (*Jaguar*), except that he is not so large. They are here

very

In a state of captivity, he retains his original manners. Nothing can soften the natural ferocity of his disposition, or calm the restlessness of his movements. For this reason, he is always kept in a cage. 'At the age of three months,' says M. l'Escot, 'when these two young ocelots had devoured their nurse, I kept them in a cage, and fed them with fresh meat, of which they eat from seven to eight pounds a-day. The male and female rub against each other like our domestic cats. The males have a remarkable superiority over the females. Notwithstanding the violent appetite of these two animals for flesh, the female never presumed to partake till the male was fatiated, or gave her the pieces he had rejected. I sometimes gave them a live cat, whose blood they sucked till the animal died; but they never eat its flesh. I put on board two kids for their subsistence; for they neither eat boiled nor salted meat *.'

It appears from the testimony of Bolivar, and likewise from that of M. l'Escot, that the female

* very numerous. They devour calves, and game of all kinds, which abound in this country, and which render them less dangerous to men. . . Their aspect is extremely proud and ferocious. Dampier's *Voyage*, vol. ii. p. 62.

* Letter of M. l'Escot, who brought these animals from Carthagena to M. de Bosc, correspondent of the Academy of Sciences, dated September 17, 1764. *Nota*, M. de Bosc, who obligingly sent this letter to us, is a great adept in natural history; and this is not the only opportunity we shall have of mentioning his communications.

ocelot

ocelot produces but two young at a litter; for the latter informs us, that, before the two young ones mentioned above were taken, the mother was killed. The ocelots, like the jaguar, the panther, the leopard, the tiger, the lion, and all animals remarkable for the largeness of their size, produce but a small number at a time. But the productions of a cat, who may be associated with this tribe, are numerous; which is a proof, that the number produced depends more upon magnitude than figure.



Plate CCXXXVIII.



OCELOT.



TIGER

Plate CCXXXIX.



FEMALE OCELOT.

Alb. Knapp.