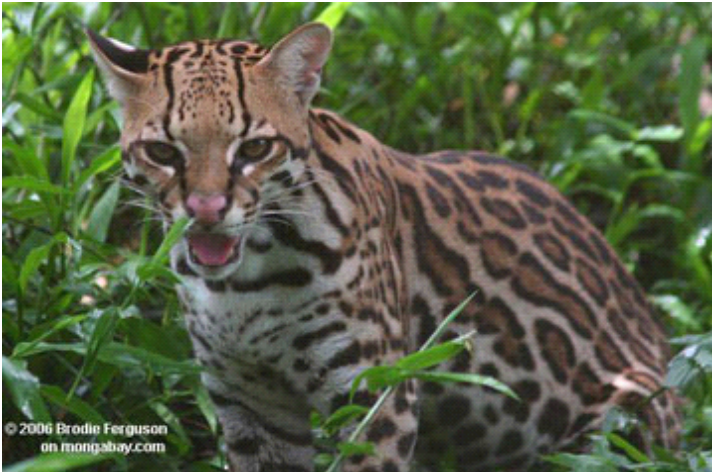


**'Reign of terror' over Fish and Wildlife Service ends with resignation**  
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Julie A. MacDonald, the deputy assistant secretary at the Interior Department who riled environmentalists by seeking to gut the endangered species act, has resigned. The resignation comes a month after MacDonald was rebuked for illegally distributing internal agency documents to industry lobbyists.

Lawmakers and environmentalists applauded the news, but said that her resignation was not going to end a pending congressional investigation into Bush Administration tampering with species protection laws.

"Julie MacDonald's reign of terror over the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is finally over," said Kieran Suckling, policy director with the Center for Biological Diversity, a group that exposed the proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act. "Endangered species and scientists everywhere are breathing a sigh of relief. But MacDonald was the administration's attack dog, not its general. The contempt for science and law that she came to symbolize goes much deeper than a single Department of Interior employee."



The ocelot is a threatened species in the United States. Photo by Brodie Ferguson

"The problems at the Fish and Wildlife Service are not merely a matter of people and personalities; the faults run much deeper than Julie MacDonald," said Nick J. Rahall II (D-West Virginia) in a prepared statement.

MacDonald's resignation comes shortly before a House committee will hold hearings on political interference with Fish and Wildlife Service biologists.

The Center for Biological Diversity says that MacDonald's counterpart, Todd Willens, is now in their sights.

"Todd Willens, is equally dedicated to undermining endangered species conservation," said the group in a statement. "Willens spearheaded Richard Pombo's (R-CA) anti-endangered species agenda as lead staffer of the House Resources Committee, then was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks on October 19, 2006. He has since been directly involved in developing sweeping anti-endangered species regulations and efforts to remove the Florida manatee and West Virginia northern flying squirrel from the endangered species list."

The Center for Biological Diversity reports that the Bush administration has listed fewer species under the Endangered Species Act than any other administration since the law was enacted in 1973, listing 52 species compared to 234 under the first Bush administration and 512 under the Clinton administration.