

# TEXAS WILDLIFE IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



A guide to game animals,  
game birds, furbearers and  
other wildlife of Texas.

# INTRODUCTION

TEXAS game animals, game birds, furbearers and other wildlife are important for many reasons.

They provide countless hours of viewing and recreational opportunities. They benefit the Texas economy through hunting and “nature tourism” such as birdwatching. Commercial businesses that provide birdseed, dry corn and native landscaping may be devoted solely to attracting many of the animals found in this book.

Local hunting and trapping economies, guiding operations and hunting leases have prospered because of the abundance of these animals in Texas. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department benefits because of hunting license sales, but it uses these funds to research, manage and protect all wildlife populations – not just game animals.

Game animals provide humans with cultural, social, aesthetic and spiritual pleasures found in wildlife art, taxidermy and historical artifacts. Conservation organizations dedicated to individual species such as quail, turkey and deer, have funded thousands of wildlife projects throughout North America, demonstrating the mystique game animals have on people.

Animals referenced in this pocket guide exist because their habitat exists in Texas. Habitat is food, cover, water and space, all suitably arranged. They are part of a vast food chain or web that includes thousands more species of wildlife such as the insects, non-game animals, fish and

rare/endangered species. Active management of wild landscapes is the primary means to continue having abundant populations of wildlife in Texas. Preservation of rare and endangered habitat is one way of saving some species of wildlife such as the migratory whooping crane that makes Texas its home in the winter.

Next time you see game animals, take a moment to reflect on the role that these animals play in the big picture that is Texas. Look for key characteristics that make each animal unique in its environment. Study an animal's characteristics, movements, tracks, sounds, habits and behavior. Always ask WHY when an animal does something unique or strange.

**Enjoy Texas Wildlife!**

## CONTENTS

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Game Animals . . . . .	1
Fur-bearing Animals . . . . .	8
Other Mammals . . . . .	17
Upland Game Birds . . . . .	25
Migratory Game Birds . . . . .	28
Exotic Species . . . . .	39
Restricted Species . . . . .	43

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# GAME ANIMALS

## WHITE-TAILED DEER

**Description:** A small- to medium-hoofed mammal with reddish brown to blue-gray or tan colorings; underside of tail is white and produces a white “flag” and rump when raised. Antlers on male consist mainly of main beam with tines growing from it.

**Range:** Texas has the most white-tailed deer of any state at over four million. The Texas “Hill Country” (Edwards Plateau) is perhaps the most densely populated area of white-tailed deer in the country. West Texas and the Panhandle are the only areas which are spotty with whitetails.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in forests, swamps, open brushy areas, foothills plains and river bottoms; herbivorous — eats forbs, browse, twigs, shrubs, acorns (mast), fungi and some grasses in season; limited movement (rarely more than one to two miles); lives to 16 years in wild; male is polygamous (breeds more than one female); “rut” starts in October through December; spotted twin fawns are normal.



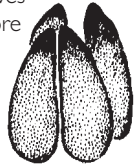
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# MULE DEER

**Description:** A medium- to large-hoofed mammal with reddish (summer) to blue-gray (winter) coloring; rump patch is cream-colored with black-tipped, cream-colored tail. Ears are larger than the whitetail and the antlers are dichotomous (branches equally — not all from one beam).

**Range:** Texas mule deer are located primarily in the High Plains and Trans-Pecos regions of West Texas. Some overlapping with white-tailed deer range occurs.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in forests, desert shrubs, chaparral, grasslands, plains, foothills and river bottoms; herbivorous — eats forbs, browse, shrubs, twigs, some grasses; migration similar to elk, but in Texas limited movement may occur. Lives to 16 years in wild; male is polygamous (breeds more than one female); “rut” starts in October through December; one to two fawns typical; spotted.



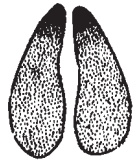
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## PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

**Description:** Only species in family, *Antilocapridae*. A medium-sized reddish to tan and white hoofed mammal with large white rump patch and short white tail. Rump hair “stands up” when alerted or fleeing from danger. Has two broad white bands across neck; males have large black cheek (jaw) patch. Males have larger slightly curved horns (sheaths over bony core) each with a single prong growing forward. Females can have smaller horns.

**Range:** Texas pronghorns live primarily in West Texas and Panhandle.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in open prairies, plains and brushlands; herbivorous — eats primarily forbs, browse and shrubs such as sagebrush, some grasses; may migrate between summer and winter ranges but limited movements in Texas; lives to 14 years in the wild; is polygamous (breeds more than one female); breeds from August through November; two fawns typical; grayish-brown.



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# DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP

**Description:** A medium- to large-hoofed mammal with dark brown to gray coloring; white rump patch with short darker tail; has two heavy, tapering, curled brown horns in male, smaller and less curled in females.

**Distribution:** Formerly native to the Trans-Pecos region; is currently being reintroduced to several Trans-Pecos sites. Studies primarily being conducted at Sierra Diablo, Elephant Mountain and Black Gap wildlife management areas near Van Horn, Texas. Currently, only one to several permits for hunting are being allowed.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in rough, rocky and mountainous terrain; prefers bluffs or steep slopes scattered with ledges of herbaceous plants such as forbs, grasses, brush and cacti and yucca-type plants and shrubs; limited movement in Texas; lives to 15 years in the wild; is polygamous (breeds with more than one female); breeds mainly in November and December; males engage in "battles" in which they butt heads; normally one small brown lamb.



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## COLLARED PECCARY (JAVELINA)

**Description:** A small pig-like mammal with coarse black and gray hair; has a ring or “collar” of light-colored hair around neck over the shoulders; upper tusks are sharp and pointed downward. Musk gland on top of rump emits a strong musk odor which can taint meat if not properly removed during skinning.

**Range:** Javelinas are scattered throughout South and Southwest Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in brushy, dense semi-arid deserts, chaparral, mesquite and cacti regions along cliffs and near waterholes; omnivorous — eats nuts, beans, berries, fruits, cacti, grubs, eggs; prefers prickly pear and acorns; travels in groups; breeds throughout the year; usually produces two young, reddish with a black stripe down the back.



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## EASTERN FOX SQUIRREL

**Description:** A large brown or gray tree squirrel with orange-red underside and bushy tail tipped with darker hairs. Colors may vary in certain areas.

**Range:** Can be found throughout the Eastern two-thirds of Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Open hard woodlands, river bottoms and pine forests with interspersed clearings; feeds primarily on nuts, acorns, seeds, fungi and buds of trees; buries nuts singly; nests in cavities in trees or builds twig and leaf nests in branches; lives to 10 years. Mates twice around January and May; 2-4 young per year.



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## EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL

**Description:** A medium-sized brown or gray tree squirrel with inner yellowish-rusty and gray or white-tipped hairs; has lighter underparts and a bushy tail with varying dark hairs tipped white or yellow.

**Range:** Can be found in East Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Hardwood forests, river bottoms and some pine forests interspersed with hardwoods and clearings; foods similar to that of fox squirrels; buries nuts singly in small holes in ground; nests in holes in trees or builds leaf nests; lives to 15 years in captivity; breeds throughout the year but mainly in late summer and winter months; 2-4 naked, blind and helpless young per litter with two litters per year.



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# FUR-BEARING ANIMALS

## BADGER

**Description:** A medium-sized furbearer with short black legs and yellowish-gray hair. It has a medium white stripe over the head to the nose, white cheeks and a black patch in front of each ear; front claws are long and used for digging.



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**Range:** Badgers occur primarily over the Western two-thirds of Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives primarily in open grasslands and deserts, mesquite, chaparrals; carnivorous, feeds mainly on small rodents which it digs up; digs out burrow for den; has lived 12 years in captivity; breeds from July to August; 2-5 young in one litter per year in underground dens.

## BEAVER

**Description:**

A medium-size furbearing rodent with brown fur. Tail is naked, scaly and paddle-shaped. Has large chestnut-colored front teeth and webbed short feet used for swimming.



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**Range:** Beavers are found throughout Texas, but mainly in the Eastern half and along the Rio Grande River.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in streams, ponds or lakes with alders, willows and trees such as cottonwoods. Constructs houses of sticks, logs and mud or burrows in banks; builds dams which serve to create suitable beaver habitat. Feeds on bark and small twigs often having cut inverted “V” shaped stumps. Stores branches underwater near lodge; builds pathways underwater; lives 11 years in wild; 2-4 kits are born from April-July.

## NUTRIA

**Description:** An introduced medium-sized, grayish-brown rodent with a long, round tail with few hairs. Looks like a beaver without the large flat tail, and has hind webbed feet.

**Range:** Nutria are found from Central Texas eastward and on the Texas Coast.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in marshes, swamps, ponds and lakes; eats aquatic vegetation; carries food to “feeding station;” nocturnal; burrows in banks with entrance above water and builds resting platforms; builds simple nest and lives four years in captivity; breeds throughout the year; 2-11 young which can swim and feed one day after birth.



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## MUSKRAT

**Description:** A small-sized furbearing rodent with a grayish underside and brown to grayish-brown fur; has a black, scaly tail and partially-webbed hind feet. Looks like a small nutria or beaver without the flattened tail.



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**Range:** Muskrats inhabit far West, Northern, Eastern and coastal borders of Texas.



**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in aquatic habitats around marshes, ponds and streams; feeds primarily on aquatic vegetation; but also clams, frogs and occasionally on small fish; builds house in shallow water or burrows in banks; entrance is usually underwater; has 2-3 litters per year of 2-6 blind and naked young.

## MINK

**Description:** A medium-sized weasel-like furbearer with dark brown fur and a white chin patch. Tail is slightly bushy.



TIM DANIEL—OHIO DNR

**Range:** Minks occur mainly in North and East-central Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Minks prefer stream, pond and lake habitat; carnivorous feeding on small mammals, birds, eggs, frogs, fish and crayfish; mainly nocturnal; dens in shoreline banks; swamps; breeds January through March; polygamous (males breed more than one female); 4-10 young are born blind and helpless.



## OTTER

**Description:** A larger weasel-like furbearer with brown fur above and silvery fur in the face, chin and belly areas; feet are webbed and the tail is thick at the base.



USFWS

**Range:** Otters are primarily in East Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Otters are aquatic and make larger streams and lakes their home; carnivorous — feeds mainly on fish, frogs and crayfish; dens typically in banks with entrances below water; lives over 14 years in captivity; 1-5 young born blind and helpless.



## LONG-TAILED WEASEL

**Description:** Weasels are small, streamlined furbearers with yellowish-white underparts and brown to reddish-brown fur over the rest of the body; has a black-tipped tail; some variations (mostly southern weasels) have white patches between eyes and under ears.



ILLINOIS DNR

**Range:** Weasels inhabit much of Texas, mainly in the Western, Southern and Eastern sections.

**Habitat/Habits:** Weasels are found in many types of habitats; carnivorous — feeds on rodents, rabbits, birds and other small animals; usually nests in old burrows, under banks, wood or rock piles; polygamous (males mate with more than one female); 4-8 young born around April of each year.



## RINGTAIL

**Description:** A cat-sized yellowish gray to darker furbearer with a long, distinctive, whitish and blackish-brown ringed tail. Catlike — has small head and medium-sized ears. Raccoon has larger body, striped face and shorter tail; only species of ringtail north of Mexico.

**Range:** Statewide, but uncommon in Coastal plains of South Texas.



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**Habitat/Habits:** Found in rocky ridges, cliffs, chaparral, semi-deserts and near water. Omnivorous — feeds on small mammals, insects, birds, lizards and some plants and fruit. Nocturnal — dens in caves, hollow trees, under rock piles and in unused buildings. Has lived to eight years in captivity; 3-4 young born around May or June.



## SPOTTED SKUNK

**Description:** Small furbearer with black fur and white patches on forehead, under ears and four broken white stripes along neck, back and sides. Tail is white-tipped.

**Range:** Eastern and Western species inhabit most of Texas.



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**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in shrublands, open wooded lots, along streams and prairies; carnivorous — feeds on mice, birds, carrion, insects and some vegetation; nocturnal — nests in burrows, beneath rock piles and in unused buildings. Emits strong scent in defense by standing on front feet; 4-7 young born around May or June.

## OTHER SKUNKS (Striped, Hooded and Hog-nosed)

**Description:** These small to medium-sized black furred skunks have large white stripes on back surfaces from the head to the tail. Some striped skunks can be more black towards the back. Striped skunks have white stripes from head to nose. Hooded skunks may sometimes be darker with fainter white stripes.



(Striped Skunk)

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**Range:** Skunks of various species including the spotted skunks occur throughout Texas.



**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in semi-open prairies and chaparrals, mixed woods, rocky areas, shrublands, valleys and near water bodies. Mostly carnivorous — feeding on mice, eggs, insects, birds, carrion and some vegetation; mostly nocturnal — dens in ground burrows, rock crevices, under buildings and rock piles. Most skunk species have from 2-6 young born from April through May.





## RACCOON

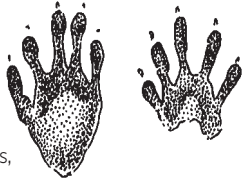
**Description:** A medium-sized furbearer with dark and light mixed fur with a distinctive large black mask across the face over whitish fur; small to medium ears and a distinctive ringed dark and light tail (much shorter than ring-tailed cat).



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**Range:** Found throughout Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives along water bodies, in wooded areas or near cliffs or bluffs; omnivorous — feeds on nuts, fruits, fish, insects, frogs, crayfish, birds, crops and eggs; may dunk food in water before eating; nocturnal — dens in hollow trees, crevices, ground burrows or in used buildings and barns; 2-7 young born around April or May.



## OPOSSUM

**Description:** Small to medium-sized gray to darkish-gray furbearer with whitish face and smaller ears; it has a rat-like tail which is round, and can hold the opossum to limbs and branches. Only marsupial in North America.



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**Range:** Can be found throughout most of Texas.



**Habitat/Habits:** Lives around woodlands, water bodies and farming areas; feeds on fruits, nuts, vegetables, meat, eggs, carrion and insects. Nocturnal — dens in hollow trees, logs, culverts, brush or rock piles and under buildings; can have several litters per year with up to 14 per litter. Young crawl to and remain in pouch for several months and later ride on mother's back interlocking tails.

## RED FOX

**Description:** This medium-sized normally reddish-yellow furbearer can also be darker or lighter in color. Has a bushy tail with characteristically white-tipped tail. Usually has dark legs; dark paws.

**Range:** Lives in North-central and Eastern Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in mixed woodlands, farming and open country; carnivorous — feeds mostly on rabbits, hares, mice and some vegetation such as fruits and berries; mostly nocturnal — dens on slopes with porous soil; 4-9 pups born around March through April.



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## GRAY FOX

**Description:** Medium-sized with “salt-and-pepper” fur outlined in rusty fur on neck, flanks and legs; has a bushy tail topped with a black stripe and tip; face is characteristic with white under gray under rust.

**Range:** Lives throughout most of Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in chaparral, open woodlands, rimrock and rocky country; omnivorous — feeds on small mammals, birds, eggs, acorns, fruits and insects; mostly nocturnal — dens in hollow trees, logs, ground burrows or beneath rocks; 3-7 young born from April through May.



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## KIT OR SWIFT FOX

**Description:** These small to medium-sized furbearers have a pale gray to buffy-yellow bodies with whitish underside; kit fox has large ears; swift fox has smaller ears; both have black-tipped tails.

**Range:** Kit foxes inhabit the Trans-Pecos region of Texas. The swift foxes inhabit the Western to Central Panhandle region.



(Kit Fox)

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## OTHER MAMMALS

### COYOTE

**Description:** A medium-sized to larger furbearer with gray to reddish-gray fur, more reddish on legs, feet and ears; has dark-tipped tail and whitish belly and throat. Resembles a medium-sized dog.

**Range:** Can be found throughout Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in prairies, open woodlands, shrublands and a variety of habitats; carnivorous — feeds primarily on rabbits, small mammals and some carrion. Mainly nocturnal but can be active anytime; dens in ground, banks or burrows, will cross with domestic dogs, 5-10 pups born from April through May.



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## BOBCAT

**Description:** A medium-sized furbearing cat with reddish-spotted fur and a black-only on top at the tip of a short tail. Has light-spotted undersides including face.

**Range:** Bobcats can be seen throughout Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Inhabits chaparrals, swamplands, woodlands, rim-rock and rocky prairie habitat; carnivorous — feeds primarily on small mammals and birds. Mainly nocturnal and solitary — dens under rock ledges, hollow logs or under downfalls; 2-4 kittens in one litter can be born throughout the year.



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## MOUNTAIN LION

**Description:** A large, tan-gray cat with long brownish tipped tail.

**Range:** Mountain lions are found mostly in South and West Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives mainly in rugged mountains and sometimes in forests and swamplands; carnivorous — feeds on large and small mammals, especially deer; makes a food “cache” out of uneaten prey; mainly nocturnal, dens in caves, rock crevices and other unconcealed locations; usually two spotted cubs born in any month.



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## NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO

**Description:** This small cat-size animal is covered with an armored body, the only one like it in the United States.

**Range:** Found throughout most of Texas except much of the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle regions.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives mainly in woodlands, brushy areas, farmlands and bluff country; feeds almost entirely on insects, but eats some berries, fruits and bird eggs; roots around in damp, moist leaves and brush for much of its food; four young of same sex are born from March through April.



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## RABBITS (Swamp and Cottontails)

**Description:** Rabbits are small brownish-gray mammals with short, round, white, dark-topped tails; large ears but not nearly as large as jackrabbits.

**Range:** Eastern cottontails are found throughout Texas, desert cottontails over the Western two-thirds and swamp rabbits over the Eastern one-third.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives in heavy brush cover in forests, farmlands and chaparral, swamplands and weed patches; herbivorous — feeds on green vegetation; 4-7 young per litter and three to four litters may be produced per year.



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## BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT

**Description:** A medium-sized (largest rabbit) grayish-brown mammal with large black-tipped ears and a black streak on top of a short tail.

**Range:** Blacktails occur throughout much of Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives primarily on open prairies, shrublands and semi-arid deserts with vegetation; herbivorous — feeds on green vegetation; 2-4 young born in litter.



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## BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG

**Description:** These small-sized tan to reddish rodents are slightly smaller than house cats; ears are small and underside is light colored; short tails are black-tipped.

**Range:** Can be found in the Western half of Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives primarily in dry upland prairies in colonies or “towns” of burrows; feeds mostly on forbs and grasses but may eat some insects; may be dormant for short times; 3-5 young are born in deep burrows from March through April.



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## GROUND AND ROCK SQUIRRELS

**Description:** Ground squirrels and the rock squirrel are small squirrel-like mammals of various tan to grayish-dark colors.

**Range:** Several species of ground squirrels and the rock squirrel can be found primarily in the Western half of Texas.

**Habitat/Habits:** Lives primarily in shortgrass prairies, grasslands, brush and shrublands, farmlands and in urban areas, especially around golf courses (thirteen-lined ground squirrel); feeds on vegetation, seeds, some insects and meat; lives in underground burrows; some hibernate; usually 4-10 young born per litter, sometimes two litters.



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# UPLAND GAME BIRDS

## QUAIL

Small chicken-like upland game birds; most have strong legs; short wings, flight is rapid but only for short distances; many like to run before choosing to fly; forage on ground for seeds and insects; not migratory.

### Northern Bobwhite

Found throughout Eastern two-thirds of Texas; abundant in brush or farmlands, chaparral and open pinelands. Males have white throat and eye-line; females are buffy colored; call is a distinctive "bob-bob-white."



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### Scaled

Found throughout West Texas in semi-arid desert country and shrublands. Have blue-gray, "fish-scale" coloration with distinctive white crest or cap; seldom flies; call is sharp with two syllables.



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## Gambel's

Found in far West Texas in dry desert-like shrublands. Has black belly patch and a distinctive black face bordered with white stripes and a teardrop-shaped topknot near front top of head; call is three slurred notes, the second being the loudest.



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## Mearns' (No open season)

Called the Montezuma quail formally; found in several locations in far West Texas. Males have distinctive spotted flanks and black and white striped head; female is brown with face patterns; call is whistle like.



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## Ring-necked Pheasant

Introduced large chicken-like bird which is found primarily in the Panhandle region, but also is located near the central coast and on private shooting preserves. Male is colorful with white neck band, green and purple iridescent head with red eye patch (skin) and grayish head with green "ear-like" tufts. Hen is a dull brown. Both have long tail feathers and fly for short distances; most are found around farmlands; call is a two-syllable cackle.



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## Prairie Chickens

Lesser and Attwater's (endangered species) are chicken-like birds with barred stripe bodies and short round tails; males gather to display before females on courtship or booming grounds; huntable

species are located in Panhandle region; Attwater's (non-huntable) is located towards the central coastal region; during display males make hollow-pitched sounds.



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## Plain Chachalaca

Found in deep South Texas mainly near Rio Grande; large chicken-like, dark-greenish to brown bird with a crest and light pink skin on throat; has long iridescent green tail; prefers thickets, woodlands or dense vegetation; call is a loud "chachalaca."



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## Turkey

Turkeys are common throughout Texas and come in several sub-species, the two most common being the Rio Grande and Eastern; large dark-colored bird with bluish (female) to red, white and blue head (mating male); prefers open woodlands, brush country,



TPWD

chaparral, river bottoms and hardwoods. Eats acorns, nuts, seeds, fruit and insects; males are polygamous; fly strong for short distances; prefers to run; mating call is a gobble and normal calls are clucks, putts and purrs.

# MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

## WATERFOWL

### Ducks

Texas is home to hundreds of thousands of ducks of many species. Most ducks winter in Texas after a long fall migration from the Northern states and Canadian provinces. Ducks are wetland birds which have webbed feet in order to swim or propel themselves through water. They have flattened bills (most pronounced in the shoveler) or serrated bills such as found in mergansers. Males of the species are usually more colorful except during eclipse plumage which results from the replacement or shedding of feathers. For a few weeks after breeding, the drakes (males) resemble the hens in appearance until they return to breeding or wintering plumage. Wing feathers are only shed once a year, maintain the same coloration and can be used to properly identify ducks in the hand. Ducks usually lay from four to as many as 18 eggs (mergansers).

### “Puddle” Ducks

Characteristics: Puddle ducks are surface feeding ducks which inhabit marshes, ponds, lakes, slow rivers and sometimes bays. They feed primarily by tipping up or dabbling or on grain crops and water plants. They “spring” into the air on take off and can walk more easily than diving ducks because legs are closer to center of body. Most have an iridescent “speculum” or upper wing patch.

Mallard



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Gadwall



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Northern  
Shoveler



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American  
Wigeon



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Northern  
Pintail



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Green-winged  
Teal



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Cinnamon  
Teal



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Blue-winged  
Teal

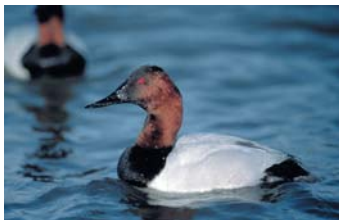


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## Diving Ducks

**Characteristics:** Diving ducks dive for food usually in large, deep lakes, rivers, ponds, coastal bays and inlets. They feed primarily on fish, shellfish, aquatic plants and mollusks. They typically run or fly low across water to takeoff and many have legs toward the back end of the body making it difficult to walk on land. Most have whitish-gray upper wing patches.

Canvasback



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Ring-necked  
Duck



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Redhead



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Lesser Scaup



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## Other Ducks

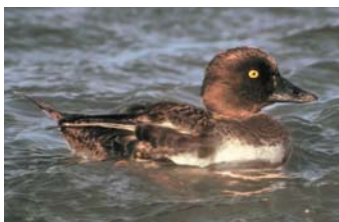
Whistling ducks, stiff-tailed ducks, sea ducks and mergansers are some of the other waterfowl which can be seen in Texas. Most have unique features such as the whistling (tree) ducks with their long legs; the stiff-tails such as the ruddy ducks with their short squatty body; and the mergansers which have a serrated bill in order to catch and eat fish. The common goldeneye and bufflehead are commonly seen in Texas.

Black-bellied  
Whistling  
Duck



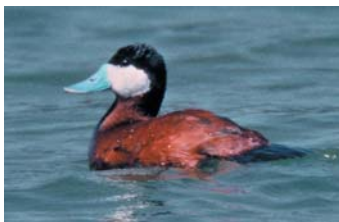
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Common  
Goldeneye  
(female)



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Ruddy Duck



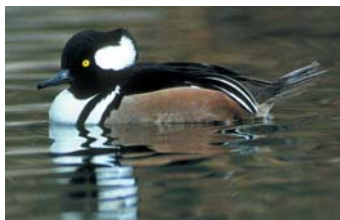
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Wood Duck



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Hooded  
Merganser



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## Geese

Texas is also home to thousands of geese of various species labeled dark or light geese in the hunting regulations. Geese winter in Texas after a long migration route mainly from Canada and Alaska. They are larger than ducks, some reaching sizes of 14 to 20 lbs. Most, however, are smaller, and both species have the same coloration. They molt once a year, and their legs are more forward on their body than ducks. This adaptation allows them to walk and graze on grains, grasses and other vegetation on land. Like ducks, they have webbed feet, flattened bills and strong wings for long flight. Young are hatched down-covered and can walk or swim a few hours after hatching. Geese are only second in size to the largest waterfowl — swans.

Canada  
Goose



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Snow Goose



TPWD

Snow Goose  
(*Blue Phase*)



P. BERNIER, MRNFP

## Greater White- fronted Goose



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## OTHER WATERFOWL

### American Coot

Slate gray duck-like bird with white bill, greenish legs and lobed feet; found throughout Texas in water environments; eats aquatic plants and must run across water to take off.

### Gallinules/Moorhens

Purple gallinules and common moorhens are closely related to coots and rails but do not swim as much in open water like coots. They hide in reeds much less than rails. Common moorhen has yellow-tipped, red bill and red frontal shield but otherwise looks like a coot. Purple gallinule looks like a "purple coot."

### Rails

Various species of rails and the sora inhabit marshes, swamplands and coastal areas of Texas. Rails are small coot-like birds which typically are shy, hiding in reeds and shoreline vegetation.

### Common (Wilson's) Snipe

A snipe is a long-billed, brownish shorebird with a striped back. Frequents marshes, ponds, meadows and coastal areas of Texas. Snipes have fast erratic flights.

### Sandhill Crane

Cranes are large migratory birds, very tall with long necks and legs. Whooping cranes (white mature and reddish young) are endangered and protected. Sandhill cranes can be hunted in some areas. They have red foreheads and prefer aquatic areas or grain fields. Call is a loud distinctive "car-r-r-o-o-o."

American  
Coot



TPWD

Common  
Snipe



TPWD

Sandhill  
Crane



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### **Plover and Shorebirds (No Open Seasons)**

Plovers and other shorebirds are mostly migratory and inhabit many of the water environments of Texas. Some like the yellowlegs look much like the snipe. It is important for hunters to properly identify birds before shooting.

## OTHER MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

### Doves

**Mourning dove** is migratory and light brownish-gray, lighter below; wings are dark; tail has white-tipped outer feathers; found throughout Texas; inhabits dry uplands, grainfields, chaparral, shrublands and deserts. Nests in most of North America and may nest several times; two white eggs; young are fed "pigeon milk" and are called squabs.

**White-winged** doves have larger, browner bodies and have white wing coverts and black wing tips; tail has white-tipped outer tail feathers; found mainly in South and Central Texas; two buffy eggs.

**White-tipped (White-fronted)** doves have a white forehead, rusty-red underwings and all-brown body and inhabit far South Texas.

### Pigeons

Unprotected domestic pigeons are more correctly called rock doves. They are dove-like but larger. There is no open season on band-tailed and red-billed pigeons, two native species which inhabit few locations in Texas.

### Woodcock (American)

Quail-sized bird with leaf-brown camouflage coloration and a long bill. Inhabits moist woodlands and thickets near open fields in East, Southeast Texas; call a loud "beep" noise; lays four brown-spotted, buff eggs among leaves or under bushes.

Mourning  
Dove



TPWD



White-  
winged  
Dove



TPWD

Woodcock



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## EXOTIC SPECIES

Exotic species are foreign animals which have been introduced into Texas. Some species like the ring-necked pheasant were highly successful with their introduction and are so abundant that they are considered a prized game bird in most states. Others such as the white rhinoceros have been introduced into Texas in hopes to prevent their extinction.

Exotic deer species have been popularly introduced into Texas, and represent a significant huntable species to sportsmen. Some exotics were originally brought to America during its discovery, and many have been domesticated to serve man's need. Game preserves stock exotic species much like they would raise agricultural crops.

Most exotics have restricted movement because of game-proof fencing and are owned by landowners. Some "free-roaming" exotics have expanded their range into neighboring counties. Exotic species are somewhat controversial because they can out-compete many of the native species such as white-tailed deer. It is important that landowners use hunters to control exotic numbers just as hunters are used in wildlife management by the states.

Exotics have many ecological, recreational, economical and certain aesthetic impacts and values in the State of Texas. Some include the axis deer, fallow deer, sika deer, blackbuck antelope, nilgai antelope, aoudad or barbary sheep, mouflan sheep, European wild boar and red deer.



Axis Deer

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Blackbuck Antelope

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Elk and Red Deer

TPWD



Fallow Deer

TPWD



Aoudad Sheep

TPWD

# RESTRICTED SPECIES

## ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND PROTECTED SPECIES

**Endangered Species** — Endangered species are rare species on the verge of extinction. Some were always rare, others have been literally wiped from existence because of human alteration of habitat. In Texas, those species and habitats are protected and research is conducted to try to increase the numbers and/or habitat of the species. Endangered species include mammals like the ocelot and the jaguarundi. Birds include the whooping crane, bald eagle and black-capped vireo. There are also endangered reptiles, amphibians, fishes and plants.

Whooping Crane  
(Endangered)



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**Threatened Species** — Threatened species are more numerous but are on the verge of endangerment. They include some whales, hawks, egrets, the Texas tortoise, Texas horned lizard and Texas indigo snake.

Reddish Egret  
(Threatened)



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### **Protected Raptors (Eagles, Falcons, Hawks, Owls) —**

Raptors are eagles, falcons, hawks and owls or birds of prey, which means they feed on other birds and mammals. Raptors serve a useful purpose in keeping down rodent populations. Although once considered harmful predators, today we know them as true “friends of man.”



**Owls  
(Protected)**

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**Protected Shorebirds** — Many shorebirds migrate with huntable waterfowl. They are protected just like raptors and serve many useful purposes. Some hunted species such as rails and snipe look like other protected species of shorebirds. Pelicans, herons, ibises, egrets, gulls and smaller shorebirds fall in this category.



**Pelicans  
(Protected)**

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**“Look-a-Likes”** — These are protected animals which look like hunted species. For example the meadowlark can be mistaken for quail or dove. Both many times fly together or inhabit the same fields. Roadrunners could be mistaken for chachalacas. American kestrels (sparrow hawks) can look like doves. Many protected sparrows and song birds look like the unprotected house sparrow. Double-crested cormorants and other shorebirds look like geese and ducks. One hunter in 1989 shot a whooping crane, mistaking it for a snow goose. All these remind hunters to be sure of their target before pulling the trigger.

**Meadowlark  
(Protected)**



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