

The Attwater's Prairie Chicken Recovery Team

Abilene Zoo
 Caldwell Zoo
 Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
 Houston Zoo
 The Land Trust Alliance
 The Nature Conservancy
 The North American Grouse Partnership
 San Antonio Zoo
 Sea World of San Antonio
 Texas A&M University
 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Attwater's Prairie Chicken

For a species on the brink of extinction, there's hope.

For more information, contact:



Adopt-a-Prairie Chicken
 4200 Smith School Road
 Austin, Texas 78744
 (800) 792-1112
 (512) 389-4644
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/apc/

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The Attwater's Prairie Chicken, one of the most endangered birds in North America, is in grave peril. A breeding and reintroduction program carried out by conservation partners could make the vital difference for survival of this special species.

On three islands of Texas coastal prairie, the last free-ranging Attwater's Prairie Chickens still breed and nest in the wild, but their existence is precarious!

Once, there were six million acres of coastal prairie, home to about a million Attwater's Prairie Chickens. By 2003, there were fewer than 50 of these birds left in the wild and most of their habitat was gone.

The alarm has not gone unheeded. Rapid declines in population have spurred conservationists to action.

In 1972, the Attwater's Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge near Eagle Lake was created. Today, it includes almost 10,000 acres of protected habitat. When one of the last remaining wild populations was found on a peninsula of land in Texas City, Mobil, the owners, donated it to The Nature Conservancy in 1995, creating the Texas City Prairie Preserve.

The summer of 2008 saw the reintroduction of these birds on private land in southeast Texas.

In 1983, under the auspices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Attwater's Prairie Chicken Recovery Team was formed to carry out science-based efforts to help save these birds. The team includes members of both public and private conservation organizations as well as individuals with expertise in species recovery. Now, birds from the team's captive-breeding program are released into the wild at the wildlife refuge, on private land and the nature preserve to help restore the population.

In 2009, 90 birds roamed the three sites, but the recovery is still far from complete.



Prairie chicken with radio collar similar to that above.



The Nature Conservancy

You Can Help!

The ultimate goal of the Attwater's Prairie Chicken Recovery Team is to create several separate, sustainable populations within the historic range of this bird. Recovery will require more habitat, more birds to release into that habitat and research to ensure their survival.

You can help. Visit zoos and other sites where the bird may be seen. Learn about this valuable, declining resource, and tell others who can also make a difference.

Support the recovery effort through donations to the Adopt-a-Prairie Chicken program. All proceeds from the program go directly to raising and releasing Attwater's Prairie Chicken chicks.

Support recovery of the Attwater's Prairie Chicken with your donations to:

Adopt-a-Prairie Chicken
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744



The Road to Recovery

Scientists have developed a recovery plan to save this bird from extinction and to remove it from the endangered species list. To reach the goal, recovery efforts focus on research, habitat management, population management, public outreach and coordination of efforts.

Research: Genetic studies and research are aimed at increasing the survival rate of birds released into the wild. Research also focuses on finding the most effective population and habitat management techniques, artificial insemination, captive diets and other factors critical to reintroduction success.

Habitat Management: Carefully planned programs of rotational grazing, prescribed burns and re-vegetation of native grasses are being implemented at the refuges, the nature preserve and on private lands where landowners have volunteered to allow captive-bred prairie chickens to be released. The Coastal Prairie Conservation Initiative promotes partnerships with private landowners, incorporating Safe Harbor Agreements and cost-share assistance into private-lands management plans. Safe Harbor Agreements assure landowners that no additional restrictions will be imposed on them if an endangered species begins to

thrive on habitat they have restored. More than 80,000 acres have been enrolled under Safe Harbor Agreements, with cost-share assistance provided on some 45,000 acres.

Population Management: Between 1996 and 2003 the captive-breeding program released an average of 86 birds a year. This has helped stabilize wild populations and slowed the march to extinction. The goal is for at least 200 birds a year to be released. Larger breeding facilities, vaccinations to control disease and improved animal husbandry programs will make this possible.

Public Outreach: Support for Attwater's Prairie Chicken recovery depends on public awareness of the bird's plight and the efforts to save it. Education and outreach programs are provided at the sites where the birds are still found by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy. Similar programs are provided by zoos and wildlife centers involved in captive breeding and by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Coordination of Efforts: Representatives from all the groups involved in the recovery program meet regularly to exchange ideas and develop strategies, eliminating duplicated efforts and maximizing resources.

A Special Species in Peril

Each spring the coastal prairie explodes in a dazzling display of sound and color! Male Attwater's Prairie Chickens dance and charge at each other in a spectacular effort to attract hens. With spread feathers pointing skyward, the roosters stamp their feet and make a loud, low pitched sound called "booming."

Of the more than six million acre "sea of grass" that greeted early American Settlers to the Texas coast, less than two percent remains. Much of this is broken in small tracts surrounded by development. Explosive human population growth along the Texas coast has supplanted the prairie with cities, subdivisions and cropland. Remnant prairies are being overrun by invasive imported species such as Chinese Tallow trees and imported fire ants, driving out native species.

Predators are another problem. In late spring, the female Prairie Chickens lay 10 to 14 eggs that hatch 26 days later, if mammals such as skunks, coyotes or opossums don't eat them. Only about 3 in 10 eggs escape these predators. The chicks that do hatch stay with the hen for about six weeks feeding mostly on insects. Juveniles, also subject to predation, will grow to the size of a small domestic chicken and can live from two to five years. With efforts to control predation, the refuges soon expect to report successful nesting on the prairie.

A 1937 study recorded about 8,700 Attwater's Prairie Chickens remaining in four Texas counties. Thirty years later, the bird was officially listed as endangered with only 1,070 birds left in the wild. Between 1980 and 1995, the remaining birds were hit with a devastating series of droughts and floods. By 2003, less than 50 prairie chickens were left. In 2009, 90 prairie chickens roam the coast.

