

# TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE



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## REGIONAL DESCRIPTION

The South Texas Plains is rich in species diversity. The region stretches south from the Hill Country to the Texas-Mexico border. Much of the area is dry and covered with grasses and thorny brush such as mesquite and prickly pear



cactus. Palms, subtropical woodlands and even citrus trees grow here. This subtropical and humid ecosystem is not found anywhere else in the United States. By 2050, population is expected to grow 175 percent. Water demands are expected to change from 87 percent to 69 percent for irrigation

and from 12 percent to 30 percent for municipal uses.

The diverse plant community provides excellent habitat for white-tailed deer and a variety of upland game bird species including northern bobwhite quail, scaled quail, Rio Grande turkeys, mourning doves, white-winged doves, and plain chachalacas. Many tropical birds from South America can be found here. Bird-watchers from across the world come to South Texas to view the many birds along the border and coastal areas. The World Birding Center complex consisting of nine nature sites focused on conservation of birds and their habitats is found here.

Less than 10 lakes are in the region. But many "resacas" can also be found here and provide a vital water source for wildlife. A resaca is a former channel of a river that has been cut off also called an ox-bow lake. Occasionally resacas fill with silt and water, creating marshes and ponds.



The Rio Grande is a very long river. Where it flows through South Texas, it is called the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The Rio Grande River stopped flowing to the

Gulf of Mexico recently due to the lack of water flow from upstream. Workers with shovels opened a path to restore the flow to the Gulf. Learn more about the [South Texas](#) region, its [history](#), [wildlife](#), and [state parks](#).

## Topography and Characteristics

**Major Rivers:** Guadalupe, San Antonio, Nueces, Lavaca, Rio Grande.

**Major Aquifer:** Edwards, Trinity, Carrizo-Wilcox, Gulf Coast

**Size:** 28,000 sq. mi.

Soils of the region are alkaline to slightly acidic clays and clay loams. The deeper soils support tall brush, such as mesquite and spiny hackberry, whereas short, dense brush grows in the shallow, caliche soils.

Learn more about the [rivers](#) and [lakes](#) in this region.

## Major Cities / Rainfall / Elevation

Average Net Evaporation rate: 16-28 inches

CITY	AVERAGE ANNUAL PRECIPITATION	ELEVATION
Alice	27.52 in.	201 ft.
Brownsville	27.55 in.	19 ft.
Crystal City	20.70 in.	580 ft.
Eagle Pass	21.48 in.	808 ft.
Falfurrias	25.42 in.	120 ft.
Goliad	38.58 in.	142 ft.
Laredo	21.53 in.	430 ft.
McAllen	22.61 in.	100 ft.
Pearsall	25.73 in.	635 ft.
Poteet	29.00 in.	480 ft.
Rio Grande City	21.61 in.	172 ft.
San Antonio	32.92 in.	809 ft.
Zapata	19.53 in.	320 ft.
Source: National Climate Data Center, U.S. Dept of Commerce, <a href="http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov">www.ncdc.noaa.gov</a>		

## Common Vegetation

Anaqua	Live oak	Tepeguaje
Brasil	Prickly pear cactus	Texas ebony
Desert yaupon	Retama	Texas kidneywood
Duckweed	Saltmarsh spikerush	Texas/Mexican wild olive
Fiddlewood	Silverleaf sunflower	Texas lantana
Honey mesquite	Sugar hackberry	Turks cap
Huisache		

Learn more on our Wildscapes page: [Plant Guidance for South Texas Brush Country](#)

## Rare Plants & Habitats

Ashy dogweed	Star cactus
Black lace cactus	Texas ayenia
Johnston's frankenia	Walkers manioc
	Zapata bladderpod

Learn more about [Endangered and Threatened Plants](#).

## Common Wildlife

Altamira oriole	Giant toad	Redwing blackbird
American beaver	Greater roadrunner	Rio Grande leopard frog
Bobcat	Green jay	Plain chachalaca
Catfish species	Grooved-billed ani	Sunfish species
Crested caracara	Mexican milk snake	Texas indigo snake
Ferruginous pygmy-owl	Mexican blue-wing butterfly	Texas tortoise

Learn more about these animals on our [Wildlife Fact Sheets](#).

## Rare Animals

Jaguarundi	Ocelot	White-nosed coati
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Learn more about [Endangered and Threatened Species](#).

# ISSUES AND TOPICS OF CONCERNS

To become environmentally literate, we first have to consider these core concepts:

1. Fish and wildlife resources are a public trust.

*Did you know that ownership of land does not convey ownership of wildlife? Example, a deer inhabiting Joe's ranch does not belong to Joe—the deer belongs to all of us.*

2. Conservation and management of terrestrial and water resources are essential to sustaining fish and wildlife, the outdoor landscape, and the quality of our lives.

*Would you agree that we all enjoy looking at a beautiful and healthy scenic landscape?*

3. Understanding and active participation in the stewardship and support of our natural resources is key.

*Would you agree that when one participates in a service project such as a tree planting, that they take pride and ownership in that habitat now and in the future?*

These are the first three of five core concepts endorsed by Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). Learn more about the [AFWA Core Concepts](#).

With the above concepts in mind, TPWD held a series of focus meetings with leading biologists across the state. They were asked: *“What issues in your area are most important for people to know or understand?”*

## Terrestrial Issues:

- Loss of Habitat Due to Population Growth
- Appreciation of Nature
- Agricultural Impacts on Wildlife and Habitat

## Aquatic Issues:

- Water Quantity
- Estuaries/Saltwater, Freshwater inflow
- Water for Wildlife

Learn more about the [wildlife habitats of South Texas](#). Explore the [Wildlife Management Areas \(WMA\) of South Texas](#). Learn more about the [state of water in the South Texas](#) region.

## **Project WILD Activities relative to regional issues**

- Migration barriers (loss of habitat)
- Shrinking Habitat (loss of habitat)
- Drawing on Nature (appreciation of nature)
- Hazardous Links, Possible Solutions (agricultural impacts)
- Designing a Habitat (water for wildlife)
- How Wet is our Planet? (water quantity)

## **Project WILD Activities with Texas Adaptations**

- Aquatic Roots
- Checks and Balances
- Here Today, Gone Tomorrow
- Watershed (Aquatic)

## **TPWD Resources**

People:

- Find your local [Game Warden](#)
- Find your local Wildlife [Biologist](#)

Student publications and activities:

- [Coloring pages](#) for South Texas
- [Teacher activities](#) for South Texas

Maps:

- South Texas ecoregion [map](#)
- Major Aquifers [map](#)
- Minor Aquifers [map](#)
- Additional [maps](#) (rainfall, vegetation, river basins, etc)

Media, Videos and Web casts:

- [Videos](#) about the state parks of the South Texas region
- [Webcasts](#) for the South Texas region
- Search the [TPW Magazine](#) for articles about South Texas

Habitat and Wildlife Publications:

Habitat:

- [An Analysis of Texas Waterways](#): A Report on the Physical Characteristics of Rivers, Streams, and Bayous in Texas
  - [Nueces River](#)
  - [San Antonio River](#)

- [The Values of Wise Land Use in an Agricultural Landscape](#)

Wetlands:

- [Texas Wetlands Conservation Plan](#)
- [Wetlands Assistance Guide for Landowners](#)
- [Texas Treasures: Wetlands](#)

Wildlife:

- [Birds of the South Texas Brushlands](#)
- [Migratory Birds of Texas](#)
- [White-tailed deer publications](#)
- [Where Have All the Quail Gone?](#)
- [Bobwhite Quail in Texas](#)
- [Bobwhite Facts and Fantasies](#)
- [Know Your Doves](#)
- [Learn About Turkey](#)
- [Scaled Quail in Texas: Their Biology and Management](#)
- [Ocelot](#)
- [Texas Cats \(Ocelot and Jaguarundi\)](#)



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