

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# BIRDS

OF

## LAKE LIVINGSTON STATE PARK



A FIELD CHECKLIST

2018



# THE LAKE LIVINGSTON ENVIRONMENT

Lake Livingston is a large artificial reservoir on the Trinity River in deep east Texas. It is bounded by Polk, San Jacinto, Trinity, and Walker counties and is a centerpiece of that fabled wild land know colloquially as the Big Thicket. This Army Corps of Engineers project was designed for recreational use and as a holding site for the city of Houston's water supply. Lake Livingston now provides 87% of Houston's water supply and over 2.3 million people depend on Lake Livingston for their water.

Such impoundments inundate many acres of habitat vital to a variety of plants and animals, but also provide many niches previously unavailable in the area. Birds are chief among the animals able to take advantage of such new niches due to their mobility. A large lake, such as the 90,000-acre Lake Livingston, is a convenient migration stopover for many waterfowl and shorebird species and a winter refuge for others.

The lake is a dramatic example of how bird populations are affected by changes in habitat. Prior to its damming the Trinity River was little more than an aerial highway for a few cormorants, ducks, and shorebirds. However, by the late 1970s the new lake had become headquarters for the world's largest concentration of Double-breasted Cormorants as well as thousands of ducks and gulls. At times, hidden among the thousands of Bonaparte's and Ring-Billed Gulls, are a host of rarities. Birders have located Sabine's Gull, California Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake among the throngs.

The "Piney-Woods" is known for its beautiful rolling hills covered with short-leaf, longleaf, and loblolly pines, sweetgums, sycamores, and a dozen species of oaks. The yaupon and hawthorn thickets can be nearly impenetrable but give way to more open swampy bottomlands where catbriars and palmettoes thrive. Occasional remnants of the old, fire-maintained prairies can be seen, especially east of the lake, and pastureland creates still other habitat types not otherwise available to birds.

Lake Livingston State Park, maintained by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, is special in providing small representative stands of many of these habitats. Available to the birder there are: open shoreline looking out across the widest expanse of Lake Livingston; native prairie, pine disclimax; hardwood bottomland; upland mixed woods; and a unique stand of thorn scrub which has yielded species of birds, such as the Ash-throated Flycatcher, not found elsewhere in the checklist area. The lake also provides an opportunity to see Bald Eagles and Osprey year-round.

There are several other good birding spots open to the public. The most notable spots include: the Dam Overlook provided by the Trinity River Authority; the Highway 190 causeway near the north end of the lake; Tigerville and Wolf Creek

Parks on the west shore of the lake; the Highway 19 bridge over the Trinity River north of Huntsville; Highway 356 where it spans creeks on the north end; and the Sam Houston National Forest in San Jacinto and Walker counties.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND WHERE

The most obvious place to begin looking is on the lake itself, but even there you will find different birds in different places. This is because different foods: plants, fish, and invertebrates, are available at different depths of the lake. Some areas attract different species because of different roosting requirements on the part of some birds.

In the river and spillway area below the dam birders can find a large assortment of gulls and terns noted earlier in the introduction. They are especially evident in winter if the floodgates are open. Large numbers of wading birds and pelicans also gather there. The deep water at the south end of the lake is a good place to scope for loons, the larger grebes, diving ducks, and mergansers. Along the shoreline you can also find Bald Eagles and Osprey nearly year-round.

At the north end of the lake, look in shallow water areas for dabbling ducks and shorebirds and the sometime vast flocks of swallows in migration. The quiet creek backwaters will often afford glimpses of night-herons, kingfishers, and Red-headed Woodpeckers. In the expanse of dead trees known as "The Jungle" between Highways 190 and 356 roost thousands of cormorants. The area also sports hundreds of Wood Ducks and wintering Mallards and several Bald Eagles and Osprey.

The woodlands are rich with species at their southwestern range limits and found nowhere in Texas except the Piney-Woods. In the pines look for Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The moister bottomlands are home for Pileated Woodpecker, American Redstart, Barred owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Woodcock, and Anhinga. The palmetto swamplands host Louisiana Waterthrush and Swainson's Warbler. The prairie-pine forest margin is habitat for Bachman's Sparrow and Prairie Warbler.

No longer found in these woods, but to be remembered as you walk through the pines and oaks, are the great hordes of Passenger Pigeons and Carolina Parakeets that once blanketed the trees. Remember too, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker whose last stronghold was in these beautiful woods.

If you want to get a taste of the Lake Livingston area but wish to do so with expert guidance you might try one of the area's Christmas Bird Counts. Information on the Christmas Bird Count can be found by visiting the Audubon website: [www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count)

# THIS CHECKLIST

The checklist is arranged and nomenclature taken from the American Ornithological Society *Check-list of North American Birds*, 7th Edition and supplements. The area covered is Trinity, Polk, and San Jacinto counties, based on records compiled and critically examined by Tony Gallucci, the author of the 1994 *Birds of Lake Livingston State Park, a Field Checklist* (PWD BK P4505-087A); and Walker County, based largely on the records compiled by Ralph Moldenhauer and Kelly Bryan in *A Checklist of the Birds of Walker County, Texas*. Additional records from the four-county area were compiled by Joel Janssen, Lake Livingston State Park Interpretive Ranger, using multiple sources in January 2018.

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*Please help us protect the natural avian communities in our parks by refraining from using playback tapes of bird songs. Frequent use of these tapes disrupts normal avian activity patterns and essential territorial behavior, and may lead to nest failure. Thank you for your cooperation.*

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## LEGEND

### **Abundance Designations – Dependent on season and habitat**

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| A = Abundant   | Always present in large numbers.   |
| C = Common     | Should not be difficult to find.   |
| U = Uncommon   | May require special effort to locate.  |
| R = Rare       | Regularly present but in small numbers and often shy.  |
| V = Vagrant    | Occurs every few years at most or occasionally occurring out of season.                      |
| I = Irregular  | Common to absent depending on annual conditions.   |
| X = Accidental | A species far out of range or habitat, one or two records or not expected to be occur again. |

### **Seasons**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| Sp | – Spring (March, April, May)           |
| S  | – Summer (June, July, August)          |
| F  | – Fall (September, October, November)  |
| W  | – Winter (December, January, February) |

# CHECKLIST

	Sp	S	F	W
_____ Black-bellied Whistling-Duck .....	U	R	R	U
_____ Fulvous Whistling-Duck .....	X			
_____ Snow Goose .....	U		C	R
_____ Ross' Goose .....			R	
_____ Greater White-fronted Goose .....	U		U	R
_____ Canada Goose .....	R		U	R
_____ Tundra Swan .....				X
_____ Wood Duck .....	C	C	C	C
_____ Blue-winged Teal .....	C	V	C	R
_____ Cinnamon Teal .....	V		R	V
_____ Northern Shoveler .....	C	V	C	A
_____ Gadwall .....	C		C	C
_____ American Wigeon .....	U		U	C
_____ Mallard .....	U	V	C	C
_____ American Black Duck .....	V			V
_____ Mottled Duck .....	V	V	V	V
_____ Northern Pintail .....	U	V	C	A
_____ Green-winged Teal .....	U	V	C	C
_____ Canvasback .....	U		C	C
_____ Redhead .....	R		R	U
_____ Ring-necked Duck .....	C	V	C	C
_____ Greater Scaup .....	R		R	R
_____ Lesser Scaup .....	U	V	U	U
_____ Surf Scoter .....			X	
_____ Black Scoter .....				X
_____ Bufflehead .....	R		U	U
_____ Common Goldeneye .....				R

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Hooded Merganser.....	I		I	I
_____ Red-breasted Merganser.....	R		R	U
_____ Masked Duck .....		X		
_____ Ruddy Duck.....	U		U	C
_____ Northern Bobwhite .....	U	U	U	U
_____ Ring-necked Pheasant .....	R	R	R	R
_____ Wild Turkey .....	R	R	R	R
_____ Least Grebe.....				
_____ Pied-billed Grebe.....	U	U	U	C
_____ Horned Grebe.....	R		R	I
_____ Eared Grebe .....	U		U	C
_____ Western Grebe.....	X			X
_____ Passenger Pigeon.....	-	-	-	-
_____ Inca Dove .....	R	U	U	
_____ Common Ground-Dove.....	V	V	V	
_____ Mourning Dove.....	A	A	A	A
_____ Rock Dove.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Yellow-billed Cuckoo.....	C	C	U	
_____ Black-billed Cuckoo .....	R		V	
_____ Greater Roadrunner .....	R	R	R	R
_____ Groove-billed Ani.....			X	
_____ Common Nighthawk .....	C	C	U	V
_____ Chuck-will's-widow.....	C	C	U	
_____ Eastern Whip-poor will.....	U		R	
_____ Chimney Swift .....	C	A	C	
_____ Ruby-throated Hummingbird.....	C	A	C	
_____ Black-chinned Hummingbird .....	X		X	
_____ Anna's Hummingbird.....				X

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Rufous Hummingbird .....	R		R	R
_____ Yellow Rail .....	X			
_____ King Rail .....			X	X
_____ Virginia Rail.....	R		R	V
_____ Sora.....	U		U	R
_____ Purple Gallinule.....	R	I		
_____ American Coot.....	C	I	A	A
_____ Sandhill Crane .....	R		U	
_____ Whooping Crane.....			X	
_____ Black-necked Stilt.....	V		R	
_____ American Avocet .....			U	
_____ Black-bellied Plover .....	R		C	
_____ American Golden-Plover.....	U		V	
_____ Snowy Plover .....			X	
_____ Semipalmated Plover .....	V		R	
_____ Piping Plover .....			U	
_____ Killdeer.....	A	A	A	A
_____ Upland Sandpiper.....	C	V	C	
_____ Whimbrel .....			X	
_____ Long-billed Curlew .....	R			V
_____ Hudsonian Godwit.....	V		R	
_____ Marbled Godwit.....			X	
_____ Ruddy Turnstone .....			I	
_____ Red Knot.....			R	
_____ Stilt Sandpiper .....	R		R	
_____ Sanderling .....			R	
_____ Dunlin .....	R		U	V
_____ Baird's Sandpiper .....	V		V	V



	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Least Sandpiper .....	U		C	
_____ White-rumped Sandpiper.....	U		R	V
_____ Buff-breasted Sandpiper .....			U	
_____ Pectoral Sandpiper .....	U		U	
_____ Semipalmated Sandpiper .....	U		U	
_____ Western Sandpiper .....			C	R
_____ Short-billed Dowitcher .....			R	
_____ Long-billed Dowitcher .....	R		U	R
_____ American Woodcock .....	R	R	U	U
_____ Wilson's Snipe .....	C		C	C
_____ Spotted Sandpiper .....	C		C	U
_____ Solitary Sandpiper .....	U		U	R
_____ Willet.....	V		R	
_____ Greater yellowlegs .....	U		U	R
_____ Wilson's Phalarope .....	R		R	
_____ Black-legged Kittiwake.....	X			X
_____ Sabine's Gull.....			X	
_____ Bonaparte's Gull .....	R		C	A
_____ Black-headed Gull .....				X
_____ Laughing Gull .....	R	V	R	U
_____ Franklin's Gull .....	U		U	
_____ Ring-billed Gull .....	U	V	C	A
_____ California Gull .....	X			X
_____ Herring Gull .....	R	V	R	U
_____ Lesser Black-backed Gull .....				X
_____ Least Tern.....			X	
_____ Caspian Tern.....	R	V	U	U
_____ Black Tern.....			R	

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Common Tern.....				V
_____ Foster's Tern.....	C	V	C	A
_____ Royal Tern.....			X	
_____ Common Loon.....	R	V	R	U
_____ Wood Stork.....		R	U	
_____ Neotropic Cormorant.....	U	R	U	R
_____ Double-crested Cormorant.....	C	R	C	A
_____ Anhinga.....	U	U	U	R
_____ American White Pelican.....	C	I	C	C
_____ Brown Pelican.....			X	
_____ American Bittern.....	R		R	V
_____ Least Bittern.....	R	I		
_____ Great Blue Heron.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Great Egret.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Snowy Egret.....	C	C	U	R
_____ Little Blue Heron.....	C	A	U	R
_____ Tricolored Heron.....	U	U	U	R
_____ Reddish Egret.....			X	
_____ Cattle Egret.....	C	A	C	U
_____ Green Heron.....	C	C	U	V
_____ Black-crowned Night Heron.....	C	C	C	U
_____ Yellow-crowned Night Heron.....	C	C	C	R
_____ White Ibis.....	U	U	U	V
_____ Glossy Ibis.....		V		
_____ White-faced Ibis.....		U	U	V
_____ Roseate Spoonbill.....	R	U	U	
_____ Black Vulture.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Turkey Vulture.....	A	A	A	A

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Osprey.....	U	V	C	U
_____ American Swallow-tailed Kite.....	X	X		
_____ White-tailed Kite .....			V	V
_____ Mississippi Kite.....	C	U	U	
_____ Bald Eagle .....	R	R	RU	C
_____ Northern Harrier .....	R		U	R
_____ Sharp-shinned Hawk .....	C	V	C	R
_____ Cooper's Hawk .....	U	R	U	R
_____ Northern Goshawk.....			X	
_____ Red-shouldered Hawk.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Broad-winged Hawk.....	C	U	A	
_____ Swainson's Hawk.....	V		R	
_____ Red-tailed Hawk.....	U	U	C	C
_____ Rough-legged Hawk.....				X
_____ Golden Eagle .....			X	
_____ Barn-Owl.....	R	R	R	R
_____ Eastern Screech-Owl.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Great Horned-Owl .....	U	U	U	U
_____ Burrowing Owl .....				X
_____ Barred Owl.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Short-eared Owl .....	X		X	
_____ Belted Kingfisher .....	C	U	C	C
_____ Red-headed Woodpecker .....	U	U	U	I
_____ Red-bellied Woodpecker .....	C	C	C	C
_____ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.....	C		C	C
_____ Ladder-backed Woodpecker .....				X
_____ Downy Woodpecker .....	C	C	C	C
_____ Hairy Woodpecker.....	R	R	R	I

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Red-cockaded Woodpecker.....	R	R	R	R
_____ Northern Flicker.....	C	R	C	C
_____ Pileated Woodpecker.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Ivory-billed Woodpecker.....	-	-	-	-
_____ Crested Caracara.....	V	V		
_____ American Kestrel.....	C	R	C	A
_____ Merlin.....			R	R
_____ Peregrine Falcon.....	R		R	V
_____ Prairie Falcon.....				X
_____ Carolina Parakeet.....	-	-	-	-
_____ Olive-sided flycatcher.....	R		R	V
_____ Eastern Wood-pewee.....	U	C	U	V
_____ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.....	U		R	
_____ Acadian Flycatcher.....	C	A	C	
_____ Alder Flycatcher.....	C		C	
_____ Willow Flycatcher.....	C		C	
_____ Least Flycatcher.....	C		U	
_____ Eastern Phoebe.....	C	V	C	C
_____ Vermillion Flycatcher.....		V		V
_____ Ask-throated Flycatcher.....				X
_____ Great Crested Flycatcher.....	C	C	U	
_____ Western Kingbird.....	V	V	R	
_____ Eastern kingbird.....	C	C	U	
_____ Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.....	C	C	C	V
_____ Loggerhead Shrike.....	C	C	C	A
_____ White-eyed Vireo.....	C	C	C	V
_____ Bell's Vireo.....	R	V	V	
_____ Yellow-throated Vireo.....	U	U	R	V

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Blue-headed Vireo .....	U		U	U
_____ Philadelphia Vireo .....	U		V	
_____ Warbling Vireo .....	U	R	U	
_____ Red-eyed Vireo .....	C	C	R	
_____ Blue Jay .....	A	A	A	A
_____ American Crow .....	A	A	A	A
_____ Fish Crow .....	V	V	V	V
_____ Horned lark .....	R	V	R	R
_____ Purple Martin .....	A	A	V	
_____ Tree Swallow .....	U		A	
_____ Northern Rough-winged Swallow .....	C	R	C	
_____ Bank Swallow .....	U		U	
_____ Cliff Swallow .....	U		U	
_____ Barn Swallow .....	C	U	C	V
_____ Carolina Chickadee .....	A	A	A	A
_____ Tufted Titmouse .....	A	A	A	A
_____ Red-breasted Nuthatch .....	I		U	I
_____ White-breasted Nuthatch .....	R	R	R	R
_____ Brown-headed Nuthatch .....	C	C	C	C
_____ Brown Creeper .....	U	C	U	U
_____ House Wren .....	C	V	C	C
_____ Winter Wren .....	R		R	U
_____ Sedge Wren .....	U		U	U
_____ Marsh Wren .....	U	V	U	U
_____ Carolina Wren .....	A	A	A	A
_____ Bewick's Wren .....	R	R	R	R
_____ Cactus Wren .....	X			
_____ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher .....	C	R	C	R

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Golden-crowned Kinglet .....	R		U	C
_____ Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	U		C	A
_____ Eastern Bluebird.....	C	C	C	C
_____ Veery .....	R			
_____ Gray-cheeked Thrush .....	U			
_____ Swainson's Thrush.....	C			
_____ Hermit Thrush.....	C		C	U
_____ Wood Thrush.....	C	U	C	
_____ Clay-colored Thrush .....				X
_____ American Robin.....	C	U	C	A
_____ Gray Catbird .....	A	R	A	R
_____ Curve-billed Thrasher.....	X		X	X
_____ Brown Thrasher .....	C	V	C	C
_____ Northern Mockingbird.....	A	A	A	A
_____ European Starling.....	C	C	C	A
_____ Cedar Waxwing.....	C		C	C
_____ House Sparrow.....	C	C	C	C
_____ American Pipit.....	C		C	A
_____ Sprague's Pipit.....	R		R	U
_____ Evening Grosbeak.....	I		I	I
_____ Purple Finch.....	R		U	U
_____ Red Crossbill .....	I		I	I
_____ Pine Siskin.....	I	V	I	I
_____ American Goldfinch.....	C		C	A
_____ Lapland Longspur.....				I
_____ Snow Bunting .....				X
_____ Olive Sparrow.....				X
_____ Eastern Towhee .....	U		U	U

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Bachman's Sparrow.....	R	R	R	R
_____ Chipping Sparrow.....	C	C	C	A
_____ Clay-colored Sparrow.....	V		R	V
_____ Field Sparrow.....	C		C	C
_____ Vesper Sparrow.....	R		U	U
_____ Lark Sparrow.....	C	C	C	R
_____ Savannah Sparrow.....	C		C	A
_____ Grasshopper Sparrow.....	U		U	U
_____ Henslow's Sparrow.....	R		V	R
_____ LeConte's Sparrow.....	U		U	U
_____ Fox Sparrow.....	U		U	U
_____ Song Sparrow.....	U		U	U
_____ Lincoln's Sparrow.....	C		C	C
_____ Swamp Sparrow.....	U		U	U
_____ White-throated Sparrow.....	C		C	A
_____ Harris's Sparrow.....				R
_____ White-crowned Sparrow.....	U		U	R
_____ Dark-eyed Junco.....	U		U	C
_____ Yellow-breasted Chat.....	C	C	U	
_____ Yellow-headed Blackbird.....	V		V	
_____ Bobolink.....	R		V	
_____ Eastern Meadowlark.....	A	A	A	A
_____ Western meadowlark.....	R		R	R
_____ Orchard Oriole.....	U	U	U	
_____ Hooded Oriole.....			X	
_____ Scott's Oriole.....				X
_____ Red-winged Blackbird.....	A	C	A	A
_____ Brown-headed Cowbird.....	C	C	C	A

	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Rusty Blackbird .....				R
_____ Brewer's Blackbird.....	U		U	U
_____ Great-tailed Grackle.....	R	R	R	R
_____ Baltimore Oriole.....	C	R	C	V
_____ Ovenbird .....	C		U	V
_____ Worm-eating Warbler .....	U	R		
_____ Louisiana Waterthrush .....	C	U	R	V
_____ Northern Waterthrush.....	C		U	
_____ Golden-winged Warbler .....	U			
_____ Blue-winged Warbler .....	U		V	
_____ Black-and-white Warbler .....	C	C	U	V
_____ Prothonotary Warbler.....	U	R		
_____ Swainson's Warbler .....	U	U		
_____ Tennessee Warbler .....	U			
_____ Orange-crowned Warbler .....	C		C	U
_____ Nashville Warbler .....	C		C	
_____ MacGillivray's Warbler .....				X
_____ Mourning Warbler.....	U		U	
_____ Kentucky Warbler .....	U	U	U	
_____ Common Yellowthroat .....	C	C	C	U
_____ Hooded Warbler .....	C	U	U	
_____ American Redstart .....	C	U	U	
_____ Cerulean Warbler .....	R	R	V	
_____ Northern Parula.....	C	C	U	
_____ Magnolia Warbler .....	C		V	
_____ Bay-breasted Warbler .....	C			
_____ Blackburnian Warbler .....	U		V	
_____ Yellow Warbler .....	U		U	



	<b>Sp</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>W</b>
_____ Chestnut-sided Warbler .....	C		V	
_____ Blackpoll Warbler .....	R			
_____ Black-throated Blue Warbler .....	X			
_____ Palm Warbler .....	V		V	V
_____ Pine Warbler .....	A	A	A	A
_____ Yellow-rumped Warbler.....	C		C	A
_____ Yellow-throated Warbler.....	U	U	U	R
_____ Prairie Warbler.....	R	R	U	
_____ Black-throated Green Warbler.....	C	V	U	
_____ Canada Warbler.....	C		R	
_____ Wilson's Warbler .....	C		C	V
_____ Summer Tanager .....	C	C	C	V
_____ Scarlet Tanager.....	U			
_____ Western Tanager.....	X			X
_____ Northern Cardinal.....	A	A	A	A
_____ Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	C		R	
_____ Black-headed Grosbeak.....				
_____ Blue Grosbeak.....	C	U	U	
_____ Lazuli Bunting.....				X
_____ Indigo Bunting.....	A	U	C	
_____ Painted Bunting.....	C	C	R	
_____ Dickcissel.....	C	C	C	

## CITATION

Janssen, Joel. January 2018. Birds of Lake Livingston State Park: a field checklist. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Natural Resources Program, Austin, Texas.

*Cover: Illustration of Bald Eagle by Rob Fleming.*

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In 1983, the Texas Legislature created the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. This fund may be used for nongame wildlife and endangered species research and conservation, habitat acquisition and development and dissemination of information pertaining to nongame management. Money for this fund is obtained through private donations and sale of nongame wildlife art prints and stamps. This fund now gives Texans a unique opportunity to help support this state's valuable and sensitive nongame resources. Your individual contributions and purchases of nongame art prints and stamps will help determine the level of nongame conservation activities in Texas. For more information call toll-free (1-800-792-1112) or contact: **Nongame and Endangered Species Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.**

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Natural Resource Program  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744