

Where to See Horned Lizards

Horned lizards have declined in many places but can still be found in many parts of South Texas, West Texas, the Rolling Plains and the Texas Panhandle. Keep your eyes open on warm days (80-95°F) in these areas, especially near harvester ant beds. You can also check out state park destinations in the Panhandle Plains, South Texas Plains and Big Bend Country travel regions.

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/

In addition, TPWD's Chaparral and Matador wildlife management areas conduct research on their populations of horned lizards. Certain public access days may provide the opportunity to glimpse a horned lizard.

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wma/

Where to Get Horned Lizards

Not so fast!! While many people ask if it's possible to get horned lizards for pets or for release on their property, TPWD does not endorse either option at this time. Horned lizards do not survive well in captivity and therefore do not make good pets. Furthermore, two species of horned lizards in Texas, the Texas horned lizard and the short-horned lizard, are listed as threatened by the state and require scientific permits for handling.

Although restocking horned lizards in places where they once occurred in the wild would seem popular with many people, several problems exist, including questions about survival in the wild. TPWD is conducting research on several of these questions with the hopes of providing more options in the future.



Texas Horned Lizard Watch is one of several projects offered by Texas Nature Trackers, a program of Texas Parks and Wildlife that invites "citizen scientists" to get involved in real research to provide needed data about species of concern. Other projects include Texas Amphibian Watch, Texas Mussel Watch, Texas Monarch Watch, Texas Black-tailed Prairie Dog Watch and several other monitoring programs. To find out more about Texas Nature Trackers or to order monitoring materials for Texas Horned Lizard Watch, please contact TPWD's Wildlife Diversity Program at:

Texas Nature Trackers
Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744
1-800-792-1112 x8062

Or visit our Texas Nature Trackers Web site at:
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/tracker/



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TEXAS Horned



Lizard WATCH

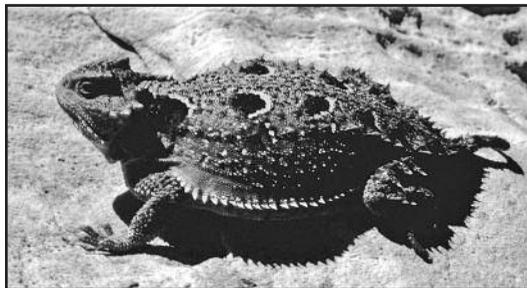
HORNY TOAD IDENTIFICATION



Texas horned lizard



Roundtail horned lizard



Short-horned lizard



Texas spiny lizard (NOT a horned lizard)



*Offering Texans who care about
horny toads a way to get involved
in conservation research.*



The Case of the Disappearing Horny Toads

Everyone loves horny toads, but for many Texans, the fierce-looking yet amiable reptile is only a fond childhood memory. Now, through participation in Texas Horned Lizard Watch, you can take part in an effort to better understand why our official state reptile is doing well in some locations and what factors may have contributed to its decline in other areas.

Once common throughout most of the state, the horny toad (or Texas horned lizard) has disappeared from many parts of its former range over the past 30 years. Its disappearance has been blamed on many factors, including collection for the pet trade, spread of the red imported fire ant, changes in land use, and environmental contaminants. For the most part, however, the decline of the Texas horned lizard has remained a mystery with little understanding of the management actions that could be taken to restore it.

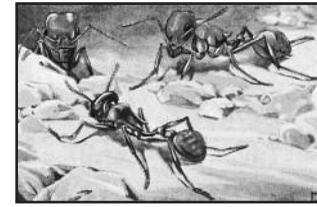
As a participant in Texas Horned Lizard Watch, you will be “on the ground”—collecting data and observations about populations of horned lizards in your area, their food sources, their potential predators or competitors and their habitat characteristics. From young to old, Ph.D. to hobbyist, there’s a way for everyone to participate!

HOW CAN I HELP?

Conduct Horned Lizard Surveys

Texas Horned Lizard Watch offers a monitoring packet with instructions and data sheets for conducting surveys for horned lizards. Whether you visit potential habitat on a daily basis, just happen to see a horned lizard, or would like to set up a transect to do quantitative monitoring of horned lizards and their habitat, there’s a way for you to participate. Sites can be on your own property, on public land, or on someone else’s property with their permission. Data from all sites is valuable, even if no horned lizards are found, because it helps us to understand habitat characteristics. It’s also a great activity for families, classrooms, and scout groups! www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hornedlizards/

Manage Horned Lizard Habitat



If you would like to increase the horned lizards on your property or perhaps attract horned lizards in the future, then habitat management is the most important step. Horned lizards prefer open, native grasslands and shrublands with plenty of bare ground and native ants (see below). Landowners can help create these conditions by using prescribed fire to remove ground litter, carefully managing grazing, restoring native plant communities, actively creating some bare ground areas, avoiding use of broadcast pesticides and managing traffic on roadways. For more publications on horned lizards and land management, contact TPWD.

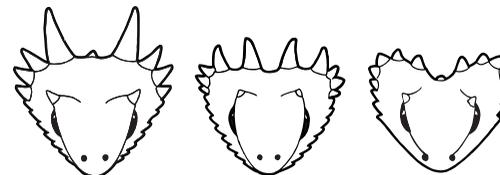
Join Conservation Efforts

The Horned Lizard Conservation Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and recovery of horned lizards. They fund research and conservation efforts and provide several field trips and newsletters each year. www.hornedlizards.org

The Fort Worth Zoo has led the way in developing captive propagation techniques for horned lizards and has horned lizards on display in its Texas Wild! exhibit. Several other zoos are in the process of getting involved in horned lizard research in Texas. www.fortworthzoo.com

HORNY TOAD FACTS

There are three species of horned lizard in Texas. All are wide-bodied with a short tail, but you can tell them apart by the number and size of “horns” on their heads. Only the Texas horned lizard seems to have suffered dramatic population declines.



TEXAS
2 long horns

ROUNDTAIL
4 medium horns

SHORT-HORNED
All horns short

Texas horned lizards feed primarily on harvester ants, also called red ants (see image above). Harvester ants build large mounds with a hole in the center. Mounds are very visible, because the ants remove the vegetation from a circular area 3 to 6 feet in diameter. One volunteer reports that one way to know if horned lizards are active is to watch for harvester ants—both species like it hot! (80-95°F).

Texas horned lizards have some amazing defenses! Its horny appearance and coloration helps it to blend into sparse vegetation. Its horns may make it less palatable. It can also inflate itself to a larger apparent size. Finally, the horned lizard is renowned for its ability to shoot a stream of blood from its eye (actually, its eyelid). Don’t mess with horny toads!



Texas conservation license plates help fund conservation efforts in the state. The most popular plate features a Texas horned lizard and provides funding for wildlife diversity projects, including horned lizard research. <http://conservation-plate.org/>