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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>AVERAGE ANNUAL PRECIPITATION</th>
<th>ELEVATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>27.52 in.</td>
<td>201 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville</td>
<td>27.55 in.</td>
<td>19 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal City</td>
<td>20.70 in.</td>
<td>580 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Pass</td>
<td>21.48 in.</td>
<td>808 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falfurrias</td>
<td>25.42 in.</td>
<td>120 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goliad</td>
<td>38.58 in.</td>
<td>142 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laredo</td>
<td>21.53 in.</td>
<td>430 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McAllen</td>
<td>22.61 in.</td>
<td>100 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearsall</td>
<td>25.73 in.</td>
<td>635 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poteet</td>
<td>29.00 in.</td>
<td>480 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande City</td>
<td>21.61 in.</td>
<td>172 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>32.92 in.</td>
<td>809 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapata</td>
<td>19.53 in.</td>
<td>320 ft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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 Webcasts:
  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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