

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# Palmetto State Park Activity Book



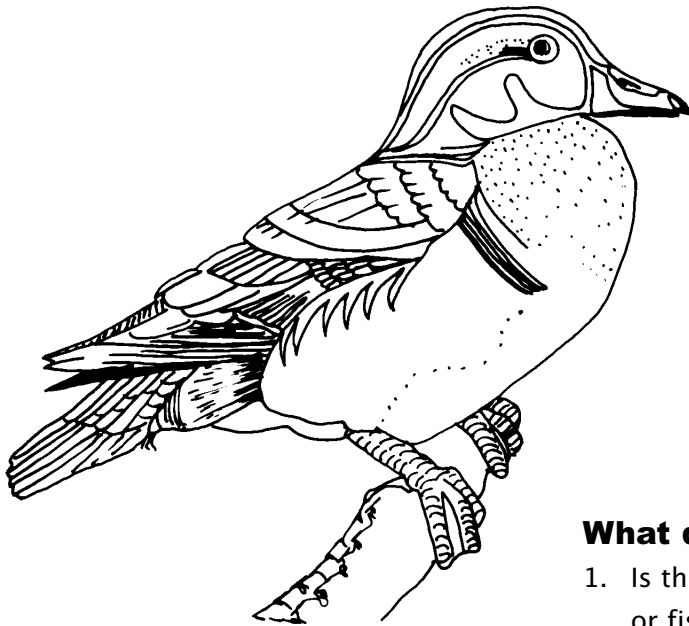
**INCLUDES PICTURES TO COLOR AND A BRIEF  
DESCRIPTION OF DIFFERENT ANIMALS THAT  
ARE FOUND IN PALMETTO STATE PARK.**

# WOOD DUCK

*Aix sponsa* (Warm-blooded)

## Lets learn about the Wood Duck

Wood ducks are typically about 19 inches in length and have a wing span of 29 inches. The males have green heads and crest streaked with white, red eyes and base of bills, purple breasts, white throats, beige sides and bluish backs. Females are duller with bluish backs and a white teardrop shaped eye patch. They eat seeds, acorns, berries, grains and insects, making them omnivores. Wood ducks live in wooded swamps and bottomland forests in the eastern and western U.S. and Canada and western Mexico. They are year-round residents in East Texas, but northern populations migrate south for the winter. They choose old woodpecker holes or other natural cavities near water for their nests. They prefer nesting over water so that the babies have a soft landing when they leave the nest. Female wood ducks usually return to nest within a half-mile of where they were born. Baby wood ducks are covered with with down, can swim and find their own food soon after they are born. They can climb as high as 8 feet to get out of the nest cavity they were born in using a special tooth on their beak.



## What did we learn about the Wood Duck?

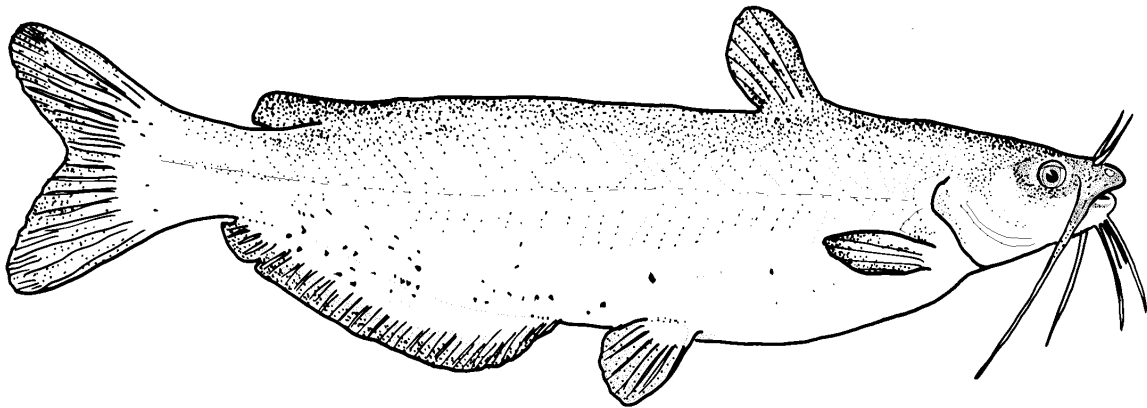
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. What color is a male wood duck's head?
4. What color is a female's eye patch?
5. How wide is their wing span?
6. What do wood ducks eat?

# CHANNEL CATFISH

*Ictalurus punctatus* (Cold-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Channel Catfish

The channel catfish is a very popular food and game fish in Texas. They live in deep, slow-moving waters with gravel or sand bottom. They are found throughout Texas. They are mainly active at night and after it rains. They are blue-gray on their backs, light blue to silver along their sides, and have scattered dark-olive to black spots. They have barbels around their mouth, which are covered with taste buds. These are used to find food. When catfish are handled, people are often "stung" by the spines on their fins not by their barbels. They are omnivores, which means they eat worms, minnows, crayfish and plant material. The female lays the eggs and the male builds the nest. He will defend it from predators and takes care of the young fish (called fry) for about one week until they can live on their own. Younger females will lay about 4,000 eggs while an older female will lay up to 20,000 eggs. Predators such as humans, raccoons and birds prey on catfish.



## What did we learn about the Channel Catfish?

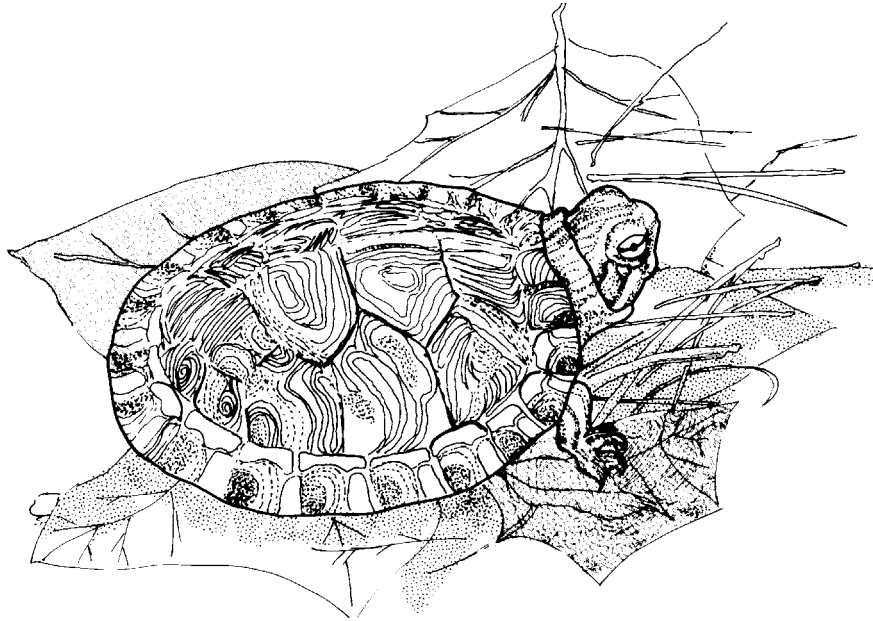
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. How does it find food in the water?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Where is it found in Texas?
6. Is it a predator, prey or both?

# RED-EARED SLIDER

*Trachemys scripta elegans* (Cold-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Red-eared Slider

The red-eared slider is a medium sized turtle with a dark green oval shell, marked with yellow in younger turtles, green legs with thin yellow stripes and a green head with a red stripe behind the eye. They eat aquatic plants, small fish and decaying material. Sliders are cold-blooded and spend much of the day sunning on rocks and logs. The young turtles are eaten by a variety of predators including birds, raccoons, alligators and large fish. They bury themselves in loose soil or mud during the winter to escape the cold. Sliders are found in most permanent slow-moving water sources with mud bottoms in the eastern three-quarters of the state. Female turtles lay their eggs in holes that they dig in the ground and leave. Young turtles are born having to take care of themselves. Sliders have poor hearing but they are very sensitive to vibrations - this makes it difficult to sneak up on them.



## What did we learn about the Red-eared Slider?

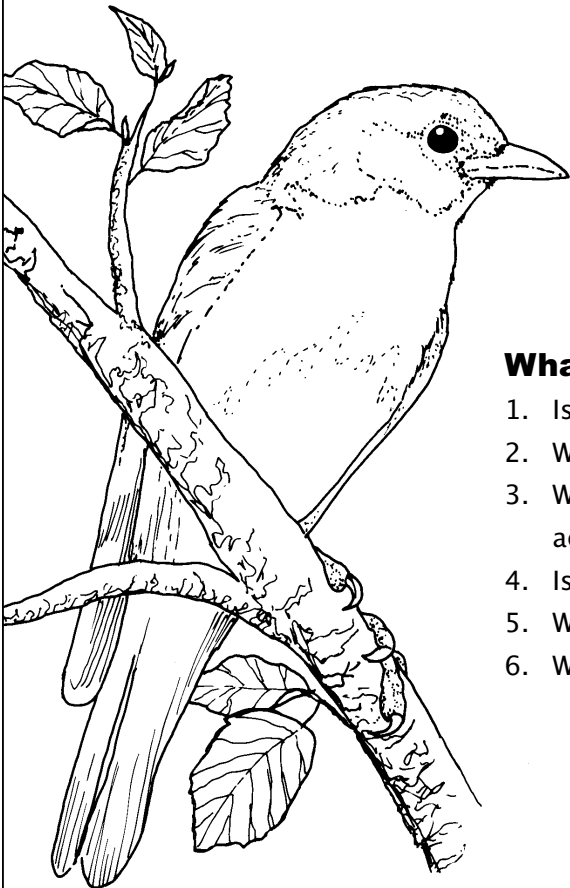
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. What do they eat?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Where does it live in Texas?
6. Where do they lay their eggs?

# EASTERN BLUEBIRD

*Sialia sialis* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Eastern Bluebird

The eastern bluebird is among one of the most popular birds in this area. The bird has a shiny blue color on its back, a rich red color on its throat and chest and a white belly. This bird occurs commonly in the eastern two-thirds of Texas and rarely in the west. Bluebirds prefer open farmland with scattered trees, orchards and even yards and parks. They will nest in cavities and old woodpecker holes in trees. They will also use nesting boxes if the entrance hole and box are the correct size. Their diet consists of insects, until cooler months when it eats berries and other fruits. The eastern bluebird has suffered a drastic population decline due to the competition between the introduced house sparrows and European starlings, clearing of dead trees and the use of pesticides. Scientists have determined that there are no blue pigments in blue feathers. Bird feathers that appear blue actually have a brown-pigmented structure in them that reflects the blue portion of the light spectrum, causing the feathers to appear blue, despite the lack of any blue pigments. Snakes eat the eggs of the eastern bluebird, while domestic cats, hawks and raccoons kill the adults.



## What did we learn about the Eastern Bluebird?

1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. What color does the feather look like and what is the actual color?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Where does it live in Texas?
6. What three reasons caused the population to decline?

# FOX SQUIRREL

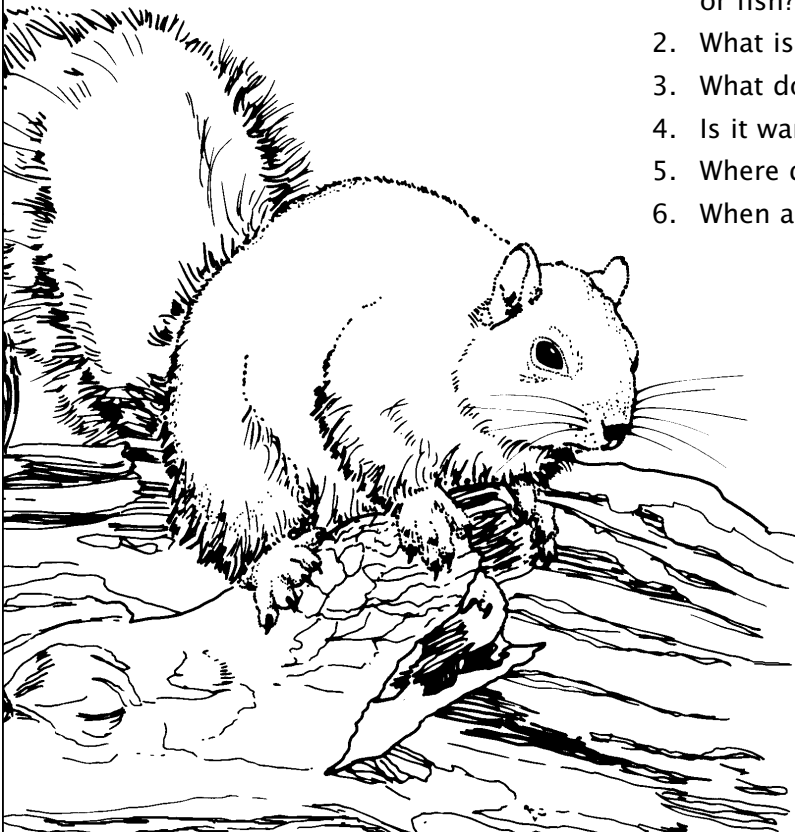
*Sciurus niger* (Warm-Blooded)

## Let's Learn about the Fox Squirrel

The fox squirrel is an important small game mammal throughout the eastern two-thirds of Texas. The scientific name comes from the Greek words skia meaning "shadow," and oura meaning "tail" which translates "as it sits in the shadow of its tail." The squirrels use their tails as umbrellas, rudders, parachutes and sun visors. They have orange bellies and brown to gray backs. They eat mainly hickory nuts and acorns but will also eat other nuts and seeds, including fruit, corn and some fungi. The squirrels are most active in morning and late afternoon burying nuts for winter, which they find with their keen sense of smell. They usually breed in January and February and then again in May and June. The young are blind, no fur and helpless at birth. At the age of three months they become independent. Humans, hawks, snakes and bobcats hunt the fox squirrels.

## What did we learn about the Fox Squirrel?

1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. What do they use their tails for?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Where does it live in Texas?
6. When are they most active?

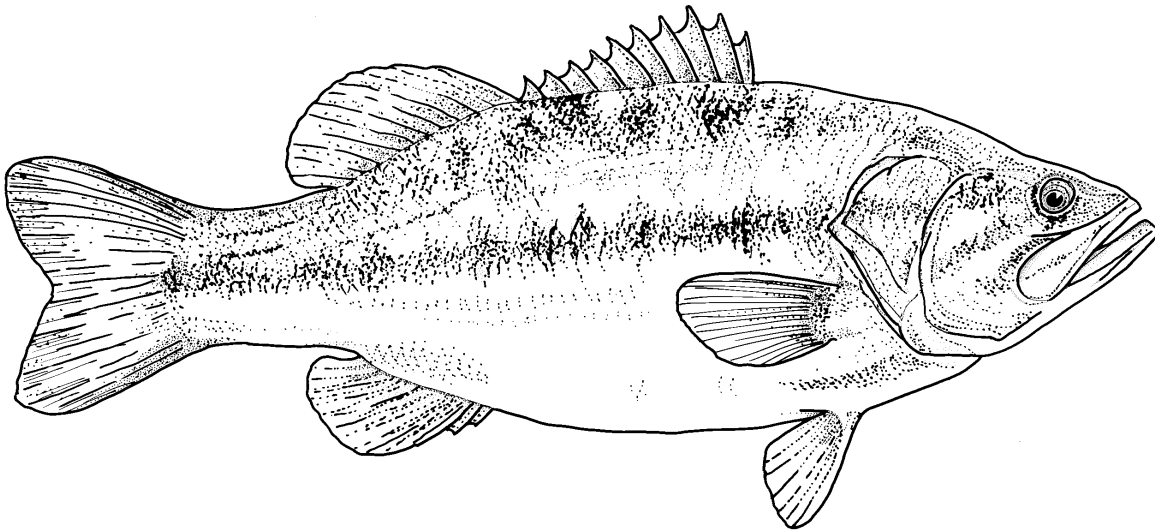


# LARGEMOUTH BASS

*Micropterus salmoides* (Cold-Blooded)

## Let's learn about the Largemouth Bass

The largemouth bass is the most sought-after game fish in Texas. They are found in almost all parts of Texas. Nesting begins in spring when the water temperatures reach about 60°F. Nests are built in two to eight feet of water. The young, called fry, hatch in five to ten days and remain in a group, which is called a school. The male will continue to guard the fry for several days after hatching. At about two inches in length, the young fry become active predators. The fry feed on zooplankton and insect larvae. Adults feed on other fish and large invertebrates such as crayfish. Large mammals and birds such as humans and eagles prey on the adults.



## What did we learn about the Largemouth Bass?

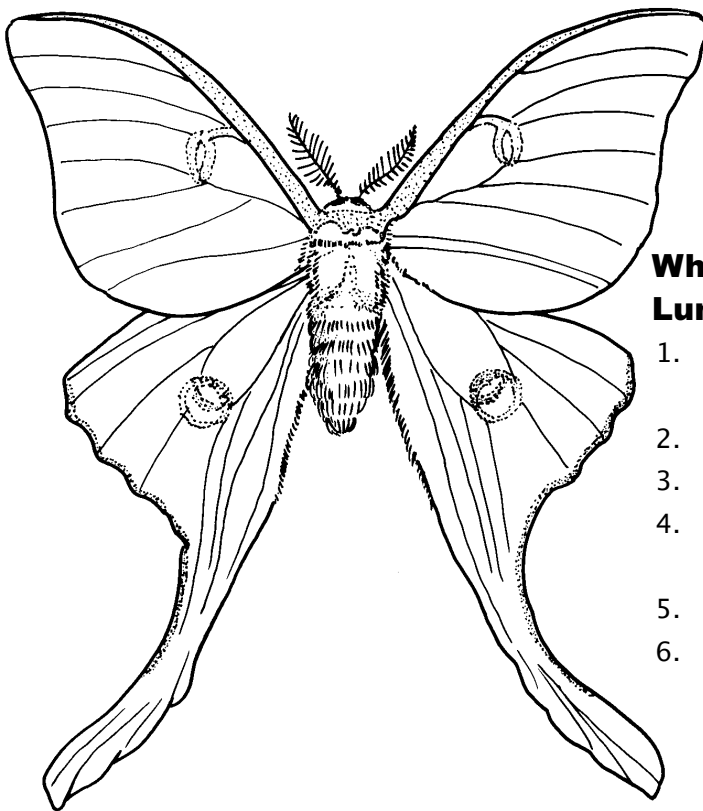
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. Is it a game, nongame or endangered species?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. What are young fish called?
6. Is it a predator, prey or both?

# LUNA MOTH

*Actias luna*

## Let's learn about the Luna Moth

The luna moth is one of the most beautiful moths found in Texas. This moth has lime green wings with eyespots on all four of its wings with the hind wings also having long tails. In the spring, these insects have pink to red borders on the forewings; in the summer, they have yellow borders. Males and females look alike except for the antennae. Females have thin feathery antennae while the males have thick feathery antennae. The moths are nocturnal and live throughout Texas but are less common in the west. They start life as a tiny egg (first stage) that hatch into lime green caterpillars with orange spots on the sides (larval stage). The caterpillars eat tree leaves for nourishment. Then they build a cocoon (pupae stage). When it is time to leave the cocoon, they push against one end of the cocoon with a horn-like projection on the base of the forewing. They use a liquid called cocoonase to open the cocoon. Once out of the cocoon, the moths must let the wings dry before flying (adult stage). As adults, the moths never eat and will only live about one week.



## What did we learn about the Luna Moth?

1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its scientific name?
3. Where does it live in Texas?
4. How many stages of growth does it go through?
5. What does it eat during its life?
6. How can you tell the difference between a male and female?



# OPOSSUM

*Didelphis virginiana* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Opossum

The opossum is easily distinguished from other mammals in East Texas by its long, scaly, prehensile tail, long and dense underfur which is white at the base and black at the tips, and long snout. Opossums are found throughout eastern Texas and occur in all but the extreme western, arid regions of the state. They live in dens constructed in ground burrows made by other animals. They are mainly nocturnal (active only at night.) They eat insects, fruit, frogs, carrion, birds and berries. When threatened, they sometimes roll over, shut their eyes and play dead or "possum" for some time. More often, they will hiss, salivate and open their mouth to show their teeth to frighten predators away. They are hunted by humans, coyotes, owls and foxes.



## What did we learn about the Opossum?

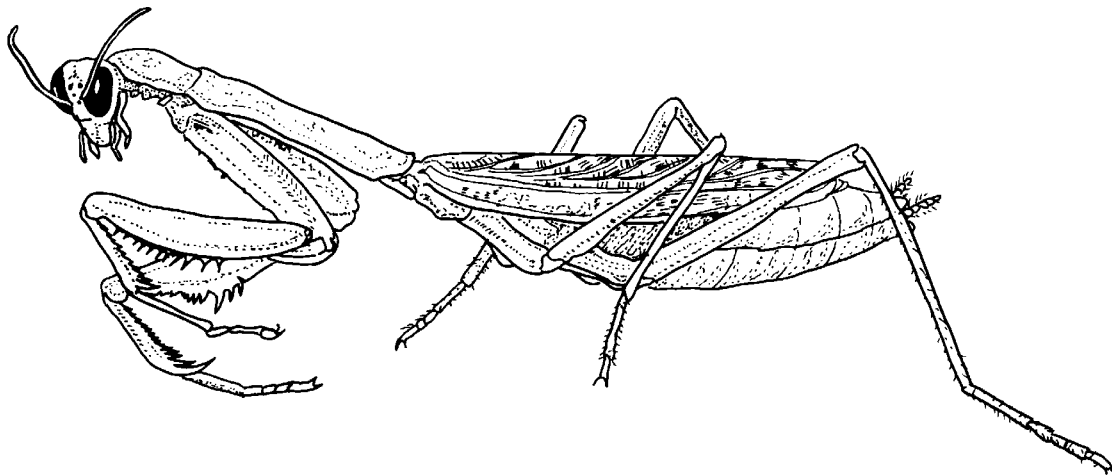
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. When are they active?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Where does it live in Texas?
6. What happens when this animal plays "possum?"

# PRAYING MANTIS

*Stagmomantis carolina*

## Let's learn about the Praying Mantis

The praying mantis gets its name from the appearance of its front legs, which it holds in a “prayer like” manner. They are large insects which may be green or brown, and they use their color as camouflage to blend into their environment. These insects are found in meadows, gardens, prairies and wooded areas. They have large heads on a long prothorax. The front legs are armed with spines to capture and grasp prey. They also have short antennae. Their long folded wings cover the abdomen. During their life cycle, they go through a simple metamorphosis. There is no larval stage. They eat a variety of insects including caterpillars, bees, moths and even other praying mantises. They hold very still to catch any insect that passes by. They will even stalk their prey. Their main predators are birds and bats. The praying mantis is the only insect that can turn its head in nearly a circle and look over its shoulder. They are considered beneficial because they keep down the population of bugs that might damage farm crops.



## What did we learn about the Praying Mantis?

1. What type of animal is the praying mantis?
2. What is its scientific name?
3. What type of habitat does it live in?
4. What does it eat?
5. What can the praying mantis do that no other insect does?
6. How does it hunt for food?

# RACCOON

*Procyon lotor* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Raccoon

The raccoon is a medium-sized mammal occurring throughout Texas. They are nocturnal and will spend the day in their den. They are commonly recognized by the black mask across the eyes and alternating black and brown rings down their bushy tail. There is a mix of red, brown and black fur on their back and grayish on their belly. They eat grapes, nuts, grubs, crickets, mice, squirrels, bird eggs, fish, clams, snakes, turtles and turtle eggs. They are even known to eat out of garbage cans. They have very nimble fingers and can easily open refrigerators, doors and coolers. It sometimes appears that they are washing their food in water, but they are feeling for material that they cannot eat in the food. Hunting these animals is a popular sport. Predators such as humans, bobcats, coyotes and owls eat raccoons.



## What did we learn about the Raccoon?

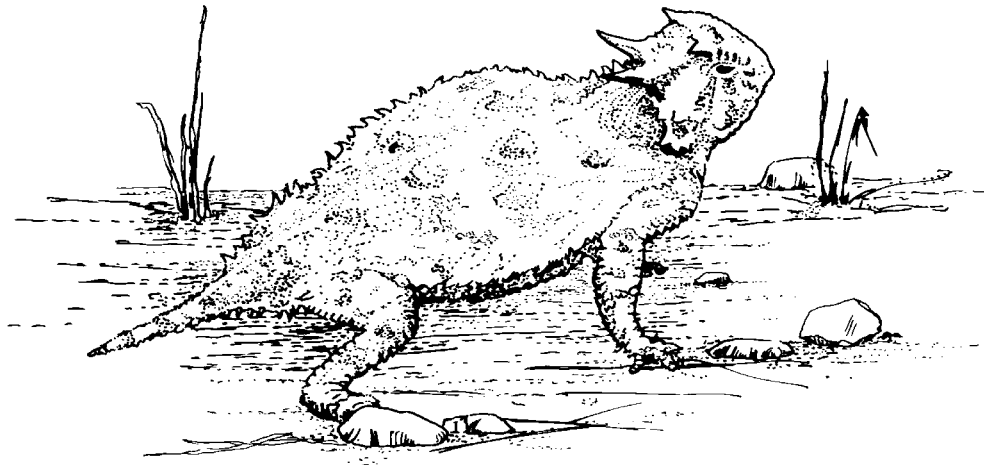
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. Why do they wet their food?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Where does it live in Texas?
6. Is it a predator, prey or both?

# TEXAS HORNED LIZARD

*Phrynosoma cornutum* (Cold-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Texas Horned Lizard

The Texas horned lizard is named for its prominent horns. There are about 14 different kinds of horned lizards, and the Texas Horned Lizard can be identified by the two central head spines, which are much longer than the rest of the spines. These lizards are brownish to tan in color. They are spiny all over the top of their body. Their wide, flattened bodies are well adapted for camouflage and burrowing. They use this adaptation to escape from predators and the heat of the desert. They mainly eat harvester ants but will eat grasshoppers and spiders. Despite low numbers in East and Central Texas, the Texas horned lizard is still locally common in portions of the Rio Grande Plains of South Texas, the Rolling and High Plains of Northwest Texas and the Trans-Pecos of far West Texas. They like to live in deserts or semi-arid environments. They hibernate starting in September to October until late April to May. These lizards have several methods of defense. First, the lizard will freeze in place and flatten its body. It freezes because its color matches the color of the ground. It flattens to get rid of any shadows on the ground to give it away. Second, it will run briefly and suddenly stop to create the illusion it disappeared. Third, it will inflate its body to look larger, hiss and last squirt a stream of blood from the corner of its eyes. The Texas horned lizard was once plentiful in this area but the population has declined in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. The decline has been linked to loss of habitat, over-collection by the pet trade and the accidental introduction of the imported fire ant. Concerns over the depletion of this treasured resource led the Texas State Legislature to provide protection for the species in 1967. It is now listed as a Protected species and is illegal for anyone to take, possess, transport or sell them without a special permit. Not only is it illegal to keep horned lizards, but they are difficult to care for in captivity and most captured ones eventually die from improper care. They are preyed on by hawks, roadrunners, snakes and coyotes.



## What did we learn about the Texas Horned Lizard?

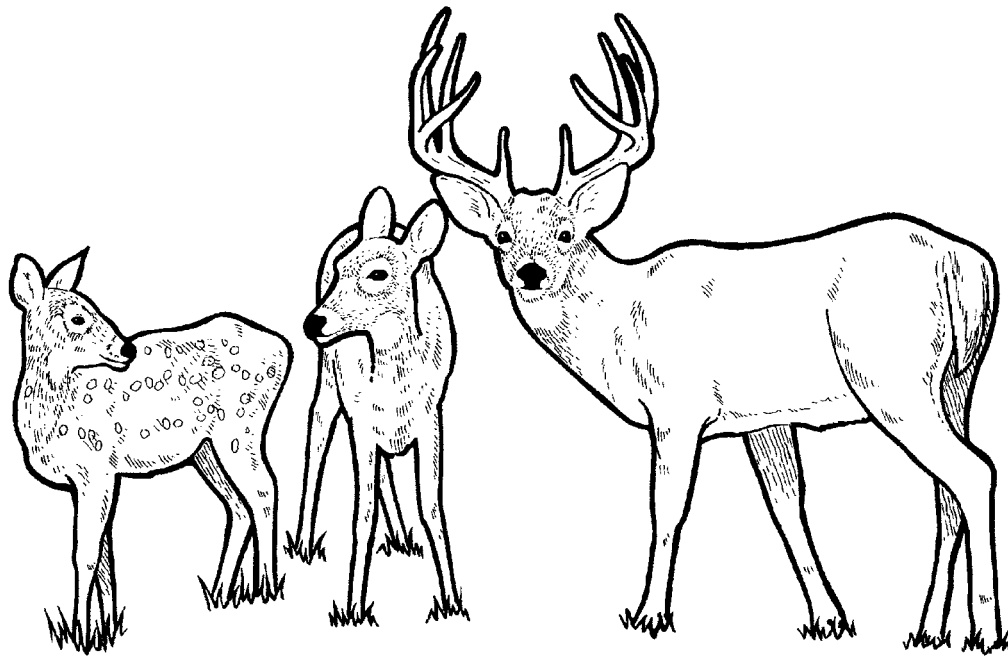
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. Is it a game, nongame or endangered species?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. What are the three ways it defends itself?
6. Can someone keep this animal as a pet?

# WHITE-TAILED DEER

*Odocoileus virginianus* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the White-tailed Deer

The white-tailed deer is a big game mammal found throughout the state. Estimates place its population at more than four million. It feeds on twigs, leaves, grasses, forbs (weed plants), fruits and nuts. If alarmed, the white-tailed deer will raise its tail, showing a large bright flash of white, to communicate danger to other deer. Breeding takes place in late fall. Fawns, born in seven months, are hidden for the first two weeks, but follow the mother as soon as they are able. The buck's majestic antlers are shed between December and March, and a new rack is grown the following year. The new rack starts growing in May and a full rack is seen in August or September. The age of a white-tailed deer is determined not by the number of tines or "points" on its horns but the wear on its teeth. Predators include the coyote, bobcat, cougar and humans. Hunting helps keep the deer population in balance with its food supply.



## What did we learn about the White-tailed Deer?

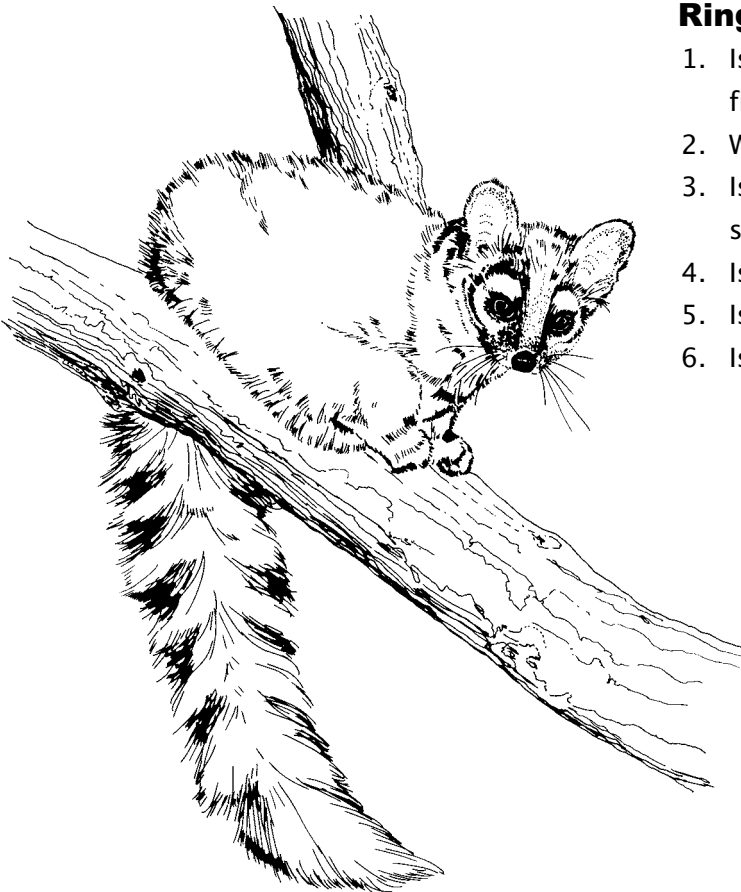
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its scientific name?
3. Is it a game, nongame or endangered species?
4. How does it communicate danger to other deer?
5. How can you tell the age of a deer?
6. Where does it live?

# RINGTAIL

*Bassariscus astutus* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Ringtail

The ringtail, found in most of the state, is a nocturnal (night-active) mammal that prefers rocky canyon ledges, crevices and caves, abandoned houses or barns, and hollow trees for homesites. It eats rats, mice, birds, rabbits, snakes, lizards and insects, as well as fruits and berries. Breeding takes place in early spring, and in six weeks, two to four toothless young are born. Their eyes and ears, sealed at birth, open in about a month, and by the time they are four months old, they are on their own. Worst enemies include the great horned owl and large snakes. Since the ringtail is a special type of game animal, known as a fur-bearer, a trapper's license is required to hunt it.



## What did we learn about the Ringtail?

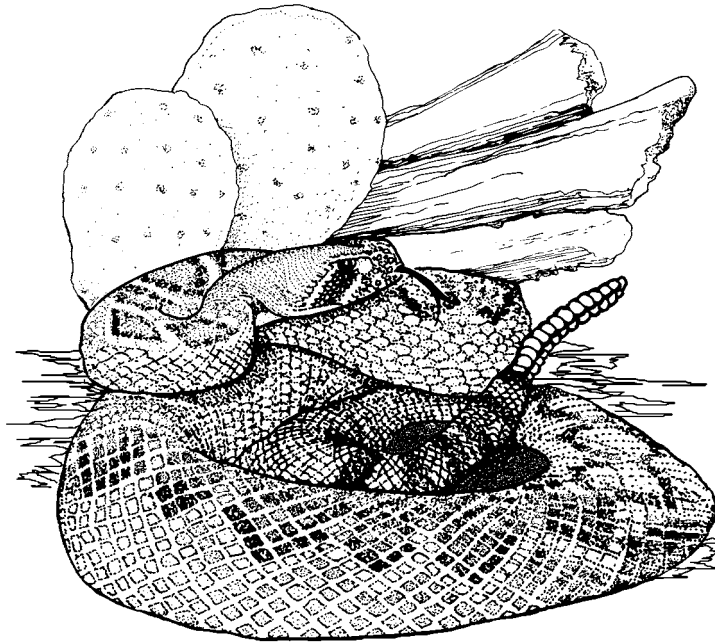
1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. Is it a game, nongame or endangered species?
4. Is it a warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. Is it active during the day or night?
6. Is it a predator, prey or both?

# WESTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE

*Crotalus atrox* (Cold-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake

The western diamondback rattlesnake is brown with diamond-shaped markings along the middle of the back and alternating black and white rings on the tail. The broken pattern allows it to blend well with its surroundings. They average 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 feet in length but can reach up to 7 feet. This is the most common and widespread venomous snake in Texas, found in all but the easternmost part of the state. This rattler can be found in rocky crevices and sunny spots on the trails. It has a bad name, but it does a lot of good in the park. It likes to snack on mice and rats that live in the fields and around the buildings.



## What did we learn about the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake?

1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. How long can it get?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. What does it eat?
6. Where is it found in Texas?

# GREAT BLUE HERON

*Ardea herodias* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Great Blue Heron

The great blue heron is the largest in the heron family, standing about 4 feet from tip of bill to end of body. Its wingspread is 6 feet and they beat only twice per second. It is gray-blue in color and lives near the water which it enters to "spear" fish and other water creatures with its beak. Sometimes it can be seen feeding in fields where it hunts gophers and mice. This heron usually nests in colonies in trees or on rock ledges. Females lay three to five large blue eggs that hatch in 28 days. After hatching, the young wait about two months before they are ready to fly. Great blue herons are common along the Texas coast, but they can also be seen beside streams, ponds and lakes across the state.



## What did we learn about the Great Blue Heron?

1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. How tall does it get?
4. Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?
5. How many eggs do they lay? What color?
6. How long is it before the young herons can fly?

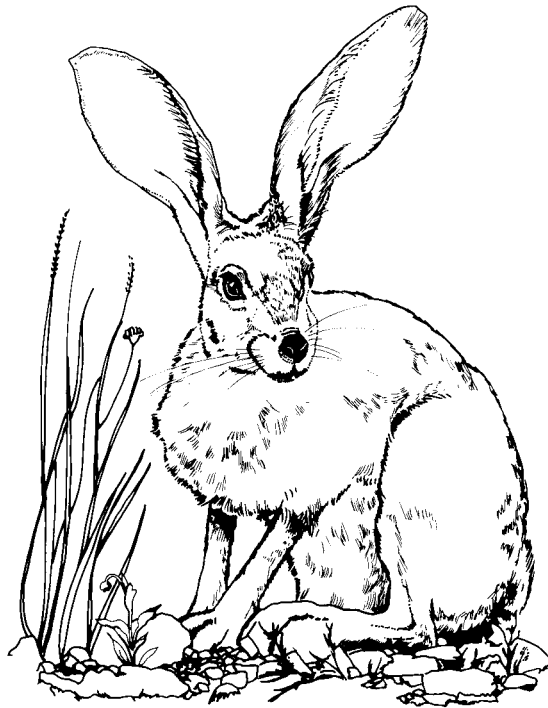


# BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT

*Lepus californicus* (Warm-blooded)

## Let's learn about the Black-tailed Jackrabbit

The black-tailed jackrabbit is a member of the hare family and has dark buff colored fur with black scattered throughout. It has distinctive long ears tipped with black and a prominent black stripe that runs from its rump across the top of its tail. This jackrabbit spends most of its day resting in a scratched-out hollow in the ground. They are generally most active at dusk and throughout the night. They rely on their speed to escape predators and will flash the white underside of their tail to alert other jackrabbits of danger. They also have an excellent sense of smell and can usually see predators like coyotes, bobcats and hawks before they can see it. They are strict vegetarians, meaning they only eat plant materials. Jackrabbits are common throughout Texas except for the far eastern part of the state.



## What did we learn about the Black-tailed Jackrabbit?

1. Is this animal a bird, mammal, reptile, insect or fish?
2. What is its common and scientific name?
3. How does it warn other jackrabbits of danger?
4. What animals do jackrabbits eat?
5. When are they most active?
6. What predators do they have to watch out for?

# SKETCH PAGE

Find something in the park you like and sketch it.

# SKETCH PAGE

Find something in the park you like and sketch it.

# SKETCH PAGE

Find something in the park you like and sketch it.

# ANSWER KEY

## Wood Duck

1. bird
2. Wood duck (*Aix sponsa*)
3. green
4. white
5. 29 inches
6. seeds, acorns, berries, grains and insects

## Channel Catfish

1. fish
2. Channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)
3. uses the barbels around the mouth which have taste buds
4. cold-blooded
5. throughout Texas
6. both

## Red-eared Slider

1. reptile
2. Red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*)
3. aquatic plants, small fish and decaying material
4. cold-blooded
5. the eastern three-quarters of the state
6. in holes they dig in the ground

## Eastern Bluebird

1. bird
2. Eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)
3. The feathers look blue, but they actually have brown pigments, not blue.
4. warm-blooded
5. eastern two-thirds of Texas
6. competition between introduced birds, clearing of dead trees and use of pesticides

## Fox Squirrel

1. mammal
2. Fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*)
3. acts like an umbrella, rudder, parachute and sun visor
4. warm-blooded
5. keen sense of smell
6. morning and late afternoon

## Largemouth Bass

1. fish
2. Largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)
3. game
4. cold-blooded
5. fry
6. both

## Luna Moth

1. insect
2. *Actias luna*
3. throughout Texas, less common in west
4. four stages
5. as caterpillars, they eat tree leaves
6. Males have thick, feathery antennas while females have thin, feathery antennas.

## Opossum

1. mammal
2. Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)
3. night
4. warm-blooded
5. throughout eastern Texas and in all parts except the extreme western, arid regions of Texas
6. They roll over, shut their eyes and play dead.

## Praying Mantis

1. insect
2. *Stagmomantis carolina*
3. found in meadows, gardens, prairies and wooded areas
4. caterpillars, bees, moths and other praying mantises
5. can turn its head in nearly a circle and can look over its shoulder
6. holds very still to catch insects passing by or stalks its prey

## Raccoon

1. mammal
2. Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)
3. to check for material in the food they cannot eat
4. warm-blooded
5. throughout Texas
6. both

## Texas Horned Lizard

1. reptile
2. Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)
3. endangered species
4. cold-blooded
5. (1) freezes and flattens body, (2) runs then stops suddenly and (3) inflates body, hisses and squirts blood from the corners of its eyes
6. no, it is illegal

## White-tailed Deer

1. mammal
2. *Odocoileus virginianus*
3. game
4. raises tail, showing bright flash of white
5. the wear on the deer's teeth
6. throughout Texas

## Ringtail

1. mammal
2. Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*)
3. game animal
4. warm-blooded
5. night
6. both

## Western Diamondback Rattlesnake

1. reptile
2. Western diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*)
3. up to 7 feet
4. cold-blooded
5. mice and rats
6. all but the easternmost part of the state

## Great Blue Heron

1. bird
2. Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)
3. 4 feet
4. warm-blooded
5. 3 to 5 blue eggs
6. 2 months

## Black-tailed Jackrabbit

1. mammal
2. Black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)
3. flashing the white underside of their tail
4. doesn't eat animals - only plant materials
5. dusk and night
6. coyotes, bobcats and hawks



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