



## WILDLIFE OF TEXAS

Houston Audubon is proud to present live virtual field trips! This program is an introduction to the diverse array of wildlife that inhabits Texas. Students will learn about fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds and discover how vertebrate animals are grouped based on their characteristics. The presentation will explore examples of native Texas wildlife from each vertebrate class and features live animals.

**OBJECTIVE:** This program focuses on the wildlife of Texas. Students will become familiar with some of the more common species of wildlife that live in different habitats throughout the state of Texas. They will be able to distinguish between the major classes of vertebrate animals (fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds).

### PROGRAM OUTLINE:

1. Introduction
2. Overview of Vertebrate Classes
3. Characteristics of Fish
4. Learn about a native Texas fish, the alligator gar
5. Characteristics of Amphibians
6. Match the sound with the native Texas frog or toad activity
7. Meet a live toad with Q&A
8. Characteristics of Reptiles
9. Meet a live native Texas reptile with Q&A
10. Discuss cold-blooded and warm-blooded animals
11. Characteristics of Mammals
12. Learn about a native Texas mammal, the flying squirrel
13. Characteristics of Birds
14. Meet a live native Texas bird with Q&A
15. Review

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

### Vertebrates

#### Fish

- Fish are cold-blooded.
- Fish live in water and use gills to breathe.
- Most fish are covered in scales.
- Most fish hatch from soft eggs.
- Fish have fins to help them swim.

#### Amphibians

- Amphibians are cold-blooded.
- Most amphibians have smooth, moist skin.
- Amphibians hatch from jelly-like eggs and go through metamorphosis.
- Amphibians live part of their lives on land, and part in the water.
- Young amphibians breathe with gills. When they are adults, most breathe with lungs.

#### Reptiles

- Reptiles are cold-blooded.
- Reptiles breathe with lungs.
- Reptiles have tough, scaly skin.
- Most reptiles hatch from soft, leathery eggs laid on land.

#### Mammals

- Mammals are warm-blooded.
- Mammals are covered with hair or fur.
- Most mammals give birth to live young.
- Mammals breathe with lungs.
- Mammals feed their babies milk.

#### Birds

- Birds are warm-blooded.
- Birds use wings to help them fly.
- Birds are covered with feathers.
- Birds breathe with lungs.
- Bird hatch from hard-shelled eggs.

## VOCABULARY:

Vertebrate- adj. having a spinal column

-noun any of a subphylum (Vertebrata) of chordates possessing a spinal column that includes the mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fishes

Habitat-noun the place or environment where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows

Cold-blooded-adj. having cold blood; specifically: having a body temperature not internally regulated but approximating that of the environment

Warm-blooded- adj.having warm blood; specifically: having a relatively high and constant internally regulated body temperature relatively independent of the surroundings

Diurnal-adj. of, relating to, or occurring in the daytime  
adj. active chiefly in the daytime

Nocturnal-adj. of, relating to, or occurring in the night  
-adj. active at night

Predator-noun one that preys, destroys, or devours  
-noun an animal that lives by predation

Prey-noun an animal taken by a predator as food

Herbivore- noun an animal that feeds chiefly on plants.

Carnivore- noun any of an order (Carnivora) of typically flesh-eating mammals

Omnivore- noun animal that eats both plant and animal matter.

Camouflage- noun concealment by means of disguise

Biodiversity-noun the variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem.

## WEBSITES:

- Fish

National Geographic: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/>

Sea World: [http://www.seaworld.org/aquademics/tetra/all\\_about\\_fish.htm](http://www.seaworld.org/aquademics/tetra/all_about_fish.htm)

- Amphibians

Amphibian Ark: <http://www.amphibianark.org/education/what-are-amphibians/>

- Reptiles

Animal Planet: <http://animal.discovery.com/reptiles>

- Mammals

The Mammals of Texas Online Edition: <http://www.nsrl.ttu.edu/tmot1/>

- Birds

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1189>

## Create a Creature Activity

Review the characteristics of the five vertebrate groups. Challenge each student to create a new creature using characteristics from the vertebrate groups and draw their creature. Ask them to name the creature and describe the habitat in which it lives. Invite students to share their creation with the class, making sure they give the name of the creature, its habitat, and a description of how its characteristics help it survive in its environment.

## Make a Field Guide for your Schoolyard

Conduct a biodiversity inventory of the plants and animals on your schoolyard grounds.

A field guide involves both indoor and outdoor activities. Outdoor activities include exploring, observing, drawing, or photographing plants and animals. Indoor activities include research, writing, and the creation of your book. You can work on your project for an hour, a day, or throughout the year.

Your pages can be simple—a picture or drawing of an animal, its common name, and its scientific name.

Or they might be more descriptive and include the time, date, and location you discovered the animal, what it was doing, and information you research on the web or at the library (habitat needs, migration and nesting information, etc.).

Resources for advanced exploration:

Book

Title: No Student Left Indoors: Creating a Field Guide to Your Schoolyard (Take a Walk Series)

Author: Jane Kirkland

Schoolyard Biodiversity Investigation Educator's Guide

<http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/ConEd-Schoolyard-Biodiversity-Guide.pdf>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Wildlife of Texas Quiz

Fill in the circle beside the correct answer

1. What is the largest freshwater fish in Texas?  
 Whale Shark  
 Alligator Gar  
 Guadalupe Bass  
 Flathead Catfish
2. Which of the following animals is NOT an amphibian?  
 Frog  
 Lizard  
 Salamander  
 Newt
3. Which of the following groups is NOT cold-blooded?  
 Fish  
 Reptiles  
 Amphibians  
 Birds
4. \_\_\_\_\_ are the only mammals that can truly fly.  
 Flying Squirrels  
 Sugar Gliders  
 Bats  
 Platypus
5. Feathers can help birds  
 fly  
 attract a mate  
 camouflage with their surroundings  
 all of the above
6. All vertebrate animals  
 have a backbone  
 are cold-blooded  
 are warm-blooded  
 lack a backbone
7. Most owls are diurnal.  
 true  
 false
8. Which of the following is NOT a Texas state mammal  
 Nine-banded Armadillo  
 Mexican Free-tailed Bat  
 Black-tailed Prairie Dog  
 Texas Longhorn

Wildlife of Texas Quiz  
Answer Sheet

1. Alligator Gar
2. Lizard
3. Birds
4. Bats
5. All of the above
6. Have a backbone
7. False
8. Black-tailed Prairie Dog