

Ken Baker's Manuscript for Biological Survey, before I added my notes (this account would represent the fauna of Padre and Mustang during dryer climates of 1950's and early 1960's) *nr. 3/27/78*

~~TERRESTRIAL VERTEBRATES~~
~~Biological Survey~~
Amphibia

Family Pelobatidae

Eastern spadefoot, Scaphiopus holbrookii.

The spadefoot can be considered common on the northern part of Padre Island, and seemingly less common on Mustang Island, even though it is seldom seen except during brief periods following heavy rains in the late spring and early summer. Spadefoots emerge from their burrows after heavy rains and breed in intermittent pools of standing rain water, at which time the calling of the males can be heard for long distances across the grass-flats. At this time, too, a few may be seen crossing roadways, but spadefoots soon retreat underground again for extended periods of time.

Family Bufonidae

Texas toad, Bufo speciosus.

This is an abundant toad on Mustang Island where it can be seen most any warm evening crossing roadways, and foraging under street lights in and around Port Aransas. It gathers in numbers in temporary rain ponds during the breeding season. The Texas toad is abundant south to the area of Corpus Christi Pass but then becomes rare on north Padre Island.

Reptilia

Family Kinosternidae

Yellow mud turtle, Kinosternum flavescens.

The mud turtle is uncommon on Mustang Island where it is found only in small numbers in stock ponds just south of Port Aransas, and was not

found in similar habitats on Padre Island. It is possible that mud turtles, and pond sliders, Chrysemys scripta, were purposefully introduced into the stock ponds of the two islands.

Family Emydidae

Western or ornate box turtle, Terrapene ornata.

Only two specimens of the box turtle were seen during the Survey, and both were dead specimens on the highway about three and four miles south of Port Aransas. If the box turtle is a resident of the two islands it is rare. These turtles, however, and the Texas tortoise, Gopherus berlandieri, are occasionally kept as pets and it is possible that these two box turtles and one tortoise ^{also found} dead on the road may have been escaped or released pets from Port Aransas.

Pond slider, Chrysemys scripta

The pond slider is uncommon on both islands and was taken during the Survey only by seining stock ponds. It is probable that these turtles were purposefully introduced into the island ponds.

Family Testudinidae

Texas tortoise, Gopherus berlandieri

The tortoise is rare on Padre and Mustang Islands, and the specimens found there may have been purposefully introduced. A single tortoise was found dead on the highway approximately three miles south of Port Aransas in 1965. The specimen had a large splotch of red paint on its carapace which suggests that it may have been a former pet. A more recent observation in 1972 was of a live tortoise seen on Padre Island on the north side of the Mansfield ship channel, an end-of-the-road spot for fishermen and campers.

Family Iguanidae

Keeled earless lizard, Holbrookia propinqua

The earless lizard appears to be the most abundant reptile on the two islands, up and down their entire length. It is seen frequently on warmer days on the back beach, in the fore dunes, and across the vegetated barrier flats in the more open areas where dense grasses do not impede its ability to run rapidly.

Texas horned lizard, Phrynosoma cornutum.

The horned lizard is common on the northern half of Padre Island, and on all of Mustang Island where it can be found in areas around the fore dunes, and across the more open areas of the vegetated barrier flats. It is occasionally seen crossing roadways, and it was found in and around inhabited areas of Port Aransas.

Family Anguidae

Slender glass lizard, Bphisaurus attenuatus

This lizard is a legless species which readily "swims" or burrows through soft sand. It is considered common to both islands but it is seldom seen. The slender glass lizards can be found occasionally by turning over boards or other objects which are flat against the ground, or by searching through leaf litter.

Family Teiidae

Six-lined race runner, Cnemidophorus sexlineatus.

This species seems partial to sandy soils throughout its distribution in Texas, and it is considered the second most common lizard on both Padre

and Mustang Islands. It is abundant in the fore dunes, and across the vegetated barrier flats. The race runner is extremely wary, fast, and difficult to capture.

Family Scincidae

Great Plains skink, Eumeces obsoletus

This species is secretive in habits, and though seldom seen it is considered common to both islands. The Great Plains skink is most often found by turning over boards and other objects which are flat against the ground.

Family Colubridae

Checkered garter snake, Thamnophis marcianus

The checkered garter snake is a common species found on both Padre and Mustang Islands in the vegetated barrier flats. It and the common glossy snake, Arizona elegans, can be found occasionally by turning over boards and other objects which are flat against the ground. The garter snake and the coachwhip, Masticophis flagellum, may also be found moving around actively during daylight hours.

Eastern hog-nosed snake, Heterodon platyrhinos.

The only specimen of the hog-nosed snake taken during the Survey was in May, 1965 on the fore beach about 10 miles south of Bob Hall Pier. The single specimen may have arrived accidentally on drift materials which were coming in on the barrier beaches from flooding rivers to the north. Brown (1950) reports records of H. platyrhinos (= contortrix) from St Joseph's and Matagorda Islands which are north of Mustang Island. The hog-nosed snake

may, therefore, be a resident of Mustang Island which abounds with toads, Bufo speciosus, since toads are the common food items of these snakes.

Coachwhip, Masticophis flagellum.

The common coachwhip has been observed in the vegetated areas of the entire length of Padre and Mustang Islands. It is the most common snake seen active during the daytime, and was on occasion seen climbing in low shrubbery and in trees. The coachwhip is extremely wary and fast.

Glossy snake, Arizona elegans.

This species is common on both islands though it is seldom seen during daylight hours except when found beneath boards and other hiding places. Dead ones are often found on highways, and at nighttime the glossy snake is easily taken alive by watching for them crossing the roadway.

Milk snake, Lampropeltis triangulum.

The milk snake is uncommon, and the species was found during the Survey only in the oak motts of north Padre Island. Three specimens were observed crossing the roads of Nueces County Park #2 and adjacent residential area at nighttime. The red, black, and yellow rings of the milk snake probably cause the species to be mistaken for the similarly colored coral snake, Micrurus fulvius, which has been reported from Padre Island but was not seen during the Survey. The coral snake is found in Flour Bluff on the mainland side of the causeway opposite north Padre Island, and it may occur rarely on the island.

Family Crotalidae

Massasauga, Sistrurus catenatus.

This species of rattlesnake is considered uncommon on Padre and Mustang Islands. Only a single specimen was taken during the Survey from the vegetated

barrier flats on Padre Island. By contrast, a large number of the diamondback rattlesnake, Crotalus atrox, were seen.

Western diamondback rattlesnake, Crotalus atrox.

The diamondback is common on both islands from the fore dunes through the vegetated barrier flats, and around the oak motts of north Padre Island. A few were seen in and around the residential areas of Port Aransas, and South Padre Island. The species is seen frequently dead on roadways.

Mammalia

Family Talpidae

Eastern mole, Scalopus aquaticus.

The eastern mole is common on the northern part of Padre Island, and seemingly less so on Mustang Island. It was not found during the Survey on the south end of Padre Island. Its presence is usually easy to determine by seeing the long serpentine ridges of sand left on the surface of the ground after moles have burrowed underneath.

Family Molossidae

Mexican freetail bat, Tadarida mexicana (brasiliensis)

The freetail^{bat} has been reported by residents of Padre and Mustang Islands to roost occasionally inside sheds and other buildings in small numbers. *Individuals have been reported from the N. Dist. Ranger Station near Malaguate Beach.* These bats are probably vagrants as no known permanent roosting places could be found during the Survey.

Family Leporidae

Black-tailed jackrabbit, Lepus californicus.

The black-tailed jackrabbit is an abundant resident of the vegetated northern half of Padre Island, and is common on Mustang Island. It is less common on South Padre Island where vegetation is much sparser. The jackrabbit is seen commonly through the fore dunes, and on the vegetated barrier flats, and it occurs on occasion along back beach areas. The jackrabbit is most active at nighttime but it can be seen also during daylight hours when disturbed from its ~~daytime~~ retreats.

Eastern cottontail, Sylvilagus floridanus

The cottontail is much less abundant than its larger relative the jackrabbit. It may be seen only on occasion in the vegetated barrier flats in and around the oak motts on north Padre Island, and rarely in small areas of pricklypear and mesquite habitat on the northern bay side of Mustang Island.

Family Sciuridae

Spotted ground squirrel, Spermophilus spilosoma

The spotted ground squirrel is abundant in the dune areas and barrier flats. It is active during the day, and it is very wary. The ground squirrel can usually be seen only at a distance, and its whistle-like calls will reveal its nearby presence when not seen. Burrows of the spotted ground squirrel are found in fore dunes, and other vegetated areas.

Family Geomyidae

South Texas pocket gopher, Geomys personatus

The subspecies G. p. personatus is restricted to Padre and Mustang Islands, though other races are common across parts of south-eastern Texas. This gopher is usually reddish-brown in coloration but specimens on Mustang Island have been seen which are blotched with large patches of white. The

pocket gopher is seldom seen on the surface of the ground but their abundant mounds across the barrier flats, on the fore dunes, and along roadsides reveal their common occurrence underground. Burrows tunneled under paved roads from one side to the other cause cave-in damage which explain the linear patches in the paved roads on the islands.

Family Heteromyidae

Ord's kangaroo rat, Dipodomys ordii

This attractive, nocturnal rodent is common in the fore dune areas, and the vegetated barrier flats of both Padre and Mustang Islands. The many entrances to its burrows, along with those of the spotted ground squirrel, are common features of the substrate. The kangaroo rat is largely nocturnal and can be seen crossing roadways at night.

Family Cricetidae

Rice rat, Oryzomys palustris

The rice rat is a semi-aquatic rodent common to parts of Padre Island and Mustang Island. Its preference for marshy, lowlying habitats explains its abundance on numerous of the spoil bank islands along the intracoastal waterway. Some of these islands from the dredged materials of the waterway are heavily populated with rice rats, to the exclusion of other rodents in many cases. Small populations of rice rats were found in swampy areas behind the fore dunes on Padre Island, and in barrier flat areas of Mustang Island.

Fulvous harvest mouse, Reithrodontomys fulvescens

The harvest mouse is somewhat uncommon on north Padre Island where it was taken only on occasion in the vegetated barrier flats adjacent to oak motts.

White-footed mouse, Peromyscus leucopus

White-footed mice are uncommon on Padre Island, and may be absent from Mustang Island. The mouse is a dweller of wooded or brushy habitats which are largely absent on the two islands. The only location where white-footed mice were taken during the Survey were in the oak motts of north Padre Island just east of the causeway.

Pygmy mouse, Baiomys taylori

These are the smallest mice found on Padre Island, all of which taken during the Survey were found in grassy areas on the north tip of the island between the causeway and Packery Channel, and the fore dune areas just north of Bob Hall Pier.

Short-tailed grasshopper mouse, Onychomys leucogaster

Along with kangaroo rats, grasshopper mice are probably the most abundant rodents on Padre and Mustang Islands. They are found commonly in grassland areas from the back beaches and fore dunes across the vegetated portions of the barrier flats to the Laguna Madre. These short-tailed mice with very soft fur are largely insectivorous, but they are also scavengers, and are predatory on other rodents. Numerous rodents caught in traps which were partially eaten are believed to have been the victims of grasshopper mice.

Hispid cotton rat, Sigmodon hispidus

The cotton rat is common in the grass flats of both islands. Numerous of these rodents were taken on north Padre Island between the highway and Packery Channel. Their presence can be easily determined by seeing the well defined trails--almost as tunnels--through dense stands of grasses. Nests of these rodents, and their trails between prickly pear clumps, were observed on the Laguna side of northern Mustang Island.

Family Muridae

Norway rat, Rattus norvegicus

The Norway rat is commensal with man around the Port Aransas area of Mustang Island, and the Port Isabel area of South Padre Island where it was found around piers, jetties, and other waterfront structures and buildings.

Roof rat, Rattus rattus

The roof rat was collected around human habitats on North Padre Island from the causeway to Bob Hall Pier, and in Port Aransas on Mustang Island. Residents of South Padre Island also reported these rodents in houses there. The roof rat is ubiquitous with man, but can also be found in the wild, though no roof rats were collected on Padre and Mustang Islands except around human habitations and trash dumps.

House mouse, Mus musculus

The house mouse is common around human habitations in Port Aransas on north Mustang Island, and in other areas of both islands where it is commensal with man. It is also found in wild habitats in the barrier flats.

Family Capromyidae

Nutria, Myocaster coypus

The nutria is the largest rodent found on Padre Island, but its status as a resident is questionable. A dead nutria in fresh condition was found on the back beach on Padre about 12 miles south of Bob Hall Pier in February, 1965. The nutria may have arrived on the beach with drift materials swept down the coast from rivers to the north which had recently flooded, and were littering the Gulf beaches with tree trunks and other debris.

Family Carnivora

Coyote, Canis latrans

The ubiquitous coyote is common on Padre and Mustang Islands where it can be seen from the beaches all the way across both islands to the edges of the Laguna Madre, and Corpus Christi Bay. Analyses of fecal materials indicate the coyote feeds on rodents and jackrabbits, as well as on crabs and fish taken from shorelines. Coyotes are sometimes seen scavenging along the beaches.

Raccoon, Procyon lotor

The raccoon was not seen during the course of the Survey but raccoon tracks were observed on the bay side of north Mustang Island south of the ferry landing at Port Aransas. A Mr. B. T. Sullinger (pers. comm.) of Aransas Pass reported seeing a female raccoon with 6 young on Mustang Island in the 1950s. Dunn (pers. comm.) reported occasional raccoons around the oak motts of north Padre Island. The raccoon, therefore, seems to be an occasional resident of the islands but its status must be considered uncommon.

Badger, Taxidea taxus

The badger and its burrows were observed on north central Padre Island, and burrows believed to be badgers were found on Mustang Island. The animal is considered uncommon although there is an abundance of ground squirrels, pocket gophers, and kangaroo rats inhabiting the islands on which badgers can feed.

Cougar, Felis concolor

Cougars have been reported on rare occasions from both Padre and Mustang Islands, with the most recent report being in the winter of 1966, 18 miles south of Bob Hall Pier (B. T. Sullinger, pers. comm.). The cougar, however, should only be considered a rare visitor to the islands, probably swimming across the intracoastal waterway from ^{mainland} areas in Kleberg and Kenedy Counties.

Family Equidae

Horse, Equus caballus

In the 1800s horses were reported as being wild on Padre and Mustang Islands, which probably explains the origin of the name "mustang" for Mustang Island. An 1828 survey party reported wild horses on north Padre Island¹ and Dunn (pers. comm.) reported that several wild horses lived on the two islands from 1885 to 1888.

Family Suidae

Pig, Sus scrofa

Feral pigs were reported by Dunn (pers. comm.) on Padre Island as being occasional in the early part of the 1900s. Some of these animals probably escaped ^{from} domestication on mainland areas of Kleberg and Kenedy Counties and wandered across the mud flats to Padre Island before the Intracoastal Waterway was dredged. The mud flats bridged the island to the mainland. Dunn also believed that other feral pigs may have been purposefully released on the barrier islands for food and sport hunting purposes.

Family Tayassuidae

Collared peccary, Dicotyles tajacu

The collared peccary, or javelina, is not common on either island but isolated reports of these animals indicate it is an occasional visitor, probably coming over from mainland Texas like other animals do on occasion from areas of Kleberg and Kenedy Counties. The most recent report was of a sow with 5 young seen 1½ miles south of Port Aransas in 1965 (W. R. McDaniels,

¹"Testimony of the Expediente of Surveys and Demarcation of the Island on the Brazo de Santiago (known as Padre Balli)" 1828, "State of Texas vs. Balli."

pers. comm.). Javelinas were reported by Dunn (pers. comm.) to be occasional on Padre Island in the early 1900s.

Family Cervidae

White-tailed deer, Odocoileus virginianus

No deer were seen on Padre and Mustang Islands during the Survey but two white-tails were observed in 1965 on Green Island in the Laguna Madre north of Port Isabel, and east of the Intracoastal Waterway. Numerous reports in recent years of deer on Padre and Mustang Islands indicate that the animals are occasional visitors from the mainland, no doubt swimming across the Waterway. There are reports that deer have swum across the ship channel at Port Aransas from St. Joseph's Island to the north. Dunn (pers. comm.), however, believed that deer were more abundant on Padre and Mustang Islands before the construction of the Waterway in 1941, and that they walked across the tidal flats from Kenedy County where white-tail deer are common on the King Ranch.

Family Bovidae

Domestic cow, Bos domesticus

Domestic cattle were common on both islands during the Survey. Both islands have had long histories of cattle ranching. The first cattle were introduced onto Padre Island about 1805, and by 1811 there were a reported 1,000 head (Sheire, 1971). Cattle were observed all the way from the fore beach wading in the surf to the Laguna Madre on Padre Island, and Corpus Christi Bay on Mustang Island.