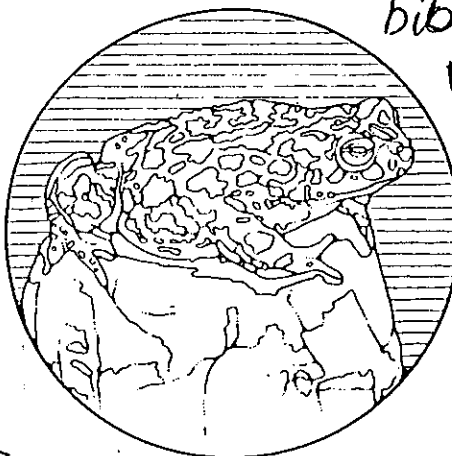


AMPHIBIANS and REPTILES CHECKLIST

Big Bend National Park, Texas

by David A. Easterla, Ph.D. 1973

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Observer(s) _____ Date(s) _____

Time(s) _____ Weather _____

Localities _____

Most common and scientific names used follow Raun and Gohlbach — Amphibians and Reptiles in Texas: Taxonomic Synopsis, Bibliography, and County Distribution Maps, 1972, Dallas Mus. Nat. Hist., Bull. 2, 132 pp. Subspecies have been ignored since they are primarily of academic interest and are often difficult to determine from field observations.

Big Bend National Park, in the southern Trans-pecos of southwestern Texas, was established in 1944 and consists of over 708,000 acres (over 1,100 sq. mi.) within the Chihuahuan Desert. The herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) is diverse and spectacular, but one must look for these animals in the proper place at the right time. Most kinds (species) of herptiles are nocturnal and retreat underground into burrows, rocky crevices, or under stones during the day to "beat the heat". One of the best ways to observe (not disturb or collect!) the park's herpetofauna (a total of 65 species) is to cruise the roads slowly on warm, humid, windless, moonless nights.

Ten species of amphibians and 55 species of reptiles are presently recorded for Big Bend National Park. Six additional species are listed as hypothetical. Unfortunately, a few species have been extirpated and no longer occur in the park because of habitat loss and human abuse. For amphibians in the park, frogs and toads are the only group (10 species). For reptiles in the park, snakes are the largest group (30 species), followed by lizards (21 species), and turtles (4 species). Although some species occur throughout the park, others are restricted to specific habitats and life-zones found at the different elevations. Five species (4 kinds of rattlesnake and 1 kind of copperhead) are poisonous and are dangerous to humans.

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Science and Resources Management
Big Bend National Park, Texas

Any observations of rare, hypothetical, or unlisted amphibians and reptiles should be reported to: Chief Park Interpreter, Panther Junction, Big Bend National Park, Texas 79834.

CLASS AMPHIBIA

ORDER ANURA — Frogs and Toads

- Couch's Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus couchi*)
Subterranean (animal burrows) or fossorial, in desert from foothills (lower Green Gulch and Panther Jct.) to lowlands (Rio Grande); common, toxic skin, nocturnal — rainy.
- Western Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus hammondi*)
Subterranean (animal burrows) or fossorial in short-grass plains, status unclear; a single park record from Panther Junction, well established north of park; toxic skin, nocturnal — rainy.
- Madroan Cliff Frog (*Syrhophus guttilatus*)
Under moist rocks, sotols, and agaves, Chisos Mountains; tiny, uncommon, nocturnal — rainy.
- Canyon Treefrog (*Hyla arenicolor*)
Rocky streams and pools, under boulders and stream-banks, sometimes in trees, Chisos Mountains and its foothills; uncommon, primarily nocturnal.
- Green Toad (*Bufo debilis*)
Secretive, burrowing, low hot deserts, only Tornillo Creek floodplain drainage, possibly Terlingua Creek drainage; very uncommon, nocturnal — heavy rainfall.
- Red-spotted Toad (*Bufo punctatus*)
Burrowing, desert, Rio Grande floodplain to foothills (i.e. Green Gulch); common, nocturnal.
- Texas Toad (*Bufo speciosus*)
Burrowing, desert, Rio Grande floodplain to Panther Junction; common, nocturnal.
- Woodhouse's Toad (*Bufo woodhousei*)
Burrowing, floodplains, only Rio Grande floodplain (Rio Grande Village and Santa Elena Canyon); rare, nocturnal — heavy rainfall.
- Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)
Permanent pools, streams, springs, ponds, and tinajas, aquatic vegetation, Rio Grande floodplain to mountain foothills; common, nocturnal and diurnal.
- Great Plains Narrow-mouthed Toad (*Gastrophryne olivacea*)
Very secretive, burrowing, pools, damp crevices & burrows, under rocks, bark, & vegetation, floodplains and desert, Rio Grande to foothills (Panther Junction); uncommon, tiny, toxic skin, nocturnal — heavy rainfall.

CLASS REPTILIA

ORDER TESTUDINATA — Turtles

- Yellow Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon flavescens*)
Floodplains and desert, shallow (often temporary) muddy pools and tanks, park lowlands (Rio Grande to Dagger Flat); uncommon, musky odor, mainly nocturnal.
- Big Bend Slider (*Chrysemys gaigeae*)
Sloughs, tanks, ponds, and rivers with a muddy bottom and aquatic vegetation, only Rio Grande floodplain; uncommon, diurnal and nocturnal.
- Western Box Turtle (*Terrapene ornata*)
Nonaquatic, prairies, only at Panther Junction (possibly escapes), well established north of the park; very rare, diurnal.
- Spiny Softshell (*Trionyx spiniferus*)
Rivers, only Rio Grande (rarely adjacent pools); uncommon, diurnal and nocturnal.

ORDER SQUAMATA (Suborder Lacertilia) — Lizards

- Mediterranean Gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*)
Human habitations: buildings, screens, often near lights, known only from Rio Grande Village (also across the river at Boquillas, Mexico); has voice, originally introduced from Old World, walks on smooth walls and ceilings, very rare, nocturnal.
- Texas Banded Gecko (*Coleonyx brevis*)
Rocky deserts, under stones, sotols, and agaves, or in rocky crevices, from lowlands to foothills (sparingly to Panther Junction and Green Gulch); has voice, fairly common, nocturnal.
- Reticulated Gecko (*Coleonyx reticulatus*)
Desert rock outcrops, lowlands, a single park record, known only from Presidio and Brewster Counties, Texas; has voice, large, can change pattern intensity, extremely rare, nocturnal.
- Greater Earless Lizard (*Cophosaurus texanus*)
Heat-loving, hot desert lowlands, Rio Grande floodplain to foothills (sparingly to Panther Junction); no ear opening, common, diurnal.
- Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus collaris*)
Open deserts with boulders, rocks, and sparse vegetation, lowlands to Chisos Mt. foothills (i.e. Pine Canyon, Panther Junction, lower Green Gulch); sometimes bipedal (runs upright), uncommon, diurnal.
- Leopard Lizard (*Crotaphytus wislizeni*)
Low, hot deserts and arid flatlands of creosotebush, only recorded at Tornillo Flat, base of Rosillos Mts., between Panther Junction and Rio Grande Village, near Boquillas, and San Vicente; sometimes bipedal, extremely rare, diurnal.
- Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)
Grasslands, plains, and deserts, recent records only from Panther Junction (escapes?) and Nine Point Draw on Upper Tornillo Flat; well established north of park, extremely rare, diurnal.
- Round-tailed Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma modestum*)
Desert flats with sparse vegetation, Rio Grande to foothills; often near ant mounds, fairly common, diurnal.
- Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*)
Lowlands, desert washes and arroyos with ample vegetative cover (mesquite thickets, prickly pear, etc.), use animal burrows, climb trees, Rio Grande floodplain sparingly to Chisos Mts. foothills (about 4000 ft.; very rare at Panther Junction); very wary, fairly common in proper habitat, diurnal.
- Canyon Lizard (*Sceloporus merriami*)
Rock loving, canyon walls, cliffs, boulders, rocky arroyos, and rarely adobe buildings, Rio Grande floodplain well into Chisos Mts. to at least 5500 ft. elev.; unwary, common, diurnal.
- Crevice Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus poinsetti*)
Rocky faces and boulders having crevices, sometimes buildings, rocky highlands of Chisos Mts. and foothills, a few records from the river canyons; wary, wedges itself in crevices, common, diurnal.
- Eastern Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus undulatus*)
Trees, shrubs, yuccas, or other types upright vegetation, sometimes logs, boulders, buildings, or signs, readily climbs, Chisos Mts. and foothills down to at least Giant Dagger Flats; fairly common, diurnal.
- Side-blotched Lizard (*Uta stansburiana*)
Lowland desert flats, sandy areas, hardpan, fine gravel, Rio Grande to foothills (3500-4000 ft. elev.; at least to Grapevine Hills & K-Bar Ranch); sometimes active in winter, burrows, common, diurnal.

- Tree Lizard (*Urosaurus ornatus*)
Rock faces, boulders, trees, Chisos Mts. and foothills (rarely to Panther Junction); climbs, uncommon, diurnal.
- Short-lined Skink (*Eumeces brevilineatus*)
Likes moisture, under rocks, agaves, sotols, prickly pears, boards, and logs near springs, seeps, or pools, parkwide except for possibly the highest parts of the Chisos Mts.; very secretive, a skulker, semi-fossorial, uncommon, diurnal.
- Great Plains Skink (*Eumeces obsoletus*)
Hides under sotols, agaves, prickly pears, stones, or in animal burrows, parkwide; secretive, a skulker, very uncommon, diurnal.
- Little Striped Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus inornatus*)
Grasslands, intermediate park elevations — K-Bar Ranch, Govt. Spring, Lone Mt., Persimmon Gap, Panther Jct., and Giant Dagger Flat; uncommon, diurnal.
- Rusty-rumped Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus scalaris*)
Grassy rocky deserts, shrublands, Chisos Mts. and foothills; common, diurnal.
- Checkered Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tesselatus*)
Rocky barren areas, only Rio Grande floodplain (mainly canyon areas such as Santa Elena Canyon and Mariscal Canyon); parthenogenic (males extremely rare), very rare, diurnal.
- Western Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*)
Barren desert flats, animal burrows, Rio Grande floodplain to mountain foothills (rare at Panther Junction); common, diurnal.
- Texas Alligator Lizard (*Gerrhonotus liocephalus*)
Forests, brushlands, only Chisos Mts.; powerful jaws, slow moving, prehensile tail, very uncommon, mainly diurnal — sometimes nocturnal.

ORDER SQUAMATA (Suborder Serpentes) — Snakes

- Texas Blind Snake (*Leptotyphlops dulcis*)
Loose soil, burrowing, moist areas, under rocks, sotols, and agaves, only Chisos Mts.; vestigial eyes, food: termites and ants, uncommon, nocturnal — rainy.
- Western Blind Snake (*Leptotyphlops humilis*)
Loose soil, burrowing, desert flats, under rocks, sotols, and yuccas, Rio Grande floodplain to mountain foothills; vestigial eyes, food: termites and ants, fairly rare, nocturnal — rainy.
- Glossy Snake (*Arizona elegans*)
Deserts, creosotebush flats, burrowing, Rio Grande floodplain to foothills (up to Panther Jct. and lower Green Gulch); uncommon, nocturnal — rainy.
- Ringneck Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*)
Rocky moist areas, mountains, under rocks, logs, sotols, and agaves, mainly Chisos Mts. and foothills — rarely other park mountains and lowlands along Rio Grande (at canyons); uncommon, nocturnal and diurnal.
- Great Plains Rat Snake (*Elaphe guttata*)
Floodplains, thick riparian growth, cane thickets, mammal burrows, crevices, only Rio Grande floodplain; secretive, rare, nocturnal and diurnal.
- Common (Baird's) Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*)
Forested uplands, rocky wooded canyons, shrublands, upland meadows, only Chisos Mts. (above 4000 ft. ele.); rare, diurnal and nocturnal.
- Trans-pecos Rat Snake (*Elaphe subocularis*)
Animal burrows, rocky crevices, canyons, deserts, creosotebush flats, rocky terrain with agave, ocotillo, cactus or sotol, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills (below 5000 ft.); secretive, uncommon, nocturnal (hot nights).

- **Western Hook-nosed Snake (*Ficimia cana*)**
Burrowing, rocky outcrops, mountains, Chisos Mts. and foothills (two lowland records — one at Boquillas Canyon Road and one at Tornillo Flat); secretive, "anal popping", rare, nocturnal.
- **Night Snake (*Hypsiglena torquata*)**
Deserts, rocky areas, creosotebush or lechuguilla associations, under rocks, boards, or sotols, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills (2 records for Basin); rear-langed, common, nocturnal.
- **Common (Sonora) Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getulus*)**
Deserts, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills; secretive, rare, nocturnal — rainy.
- **Gray-banded Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis mexicana*)**
Rocky outcrops, mountains, Chisos Mts. and foothills (known from rocky lowlands outside the park); very secretive, two main color phases: *alterna* morph (the one occurring in park) and *blairi* morph, extremely rare; probably the rarest park snake and one of the rarest in the United States, nocturnal.
- **Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*)**
Rocky areas, Chisos Mts. and foothills (down to Panther Jct.); secretive, very rare, nocturnal — rainy.
- **Coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*)**
Deserts, lowlands, shrublands, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills; swift, sometimes climbs, common, diurnal — heat of day.
- **Striped Whipsnake (*Masticophis taeniatus*)**
Rocky outcrops, brushlands, animal burrows, parkwide except for possibly the highest parts of the Chisos Mts.; very alert, swift, readily climbs trees, uncommon, diurnal.
- **Plain-bellied Water Snake (*Matix erythrogaster*)**
Aquatic, ponds, rivers, only Rio Grande between Hot Springs and Boquillas Canyon; secretive, very alert, very rare, nocturnal.
- **Bullsnake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*)**
Deserts, shrublands, woodlands, sometimes burrows, parkwide; hisses, vibrates tail, sometimes climbs, uncommon, diurnal and nocturnal.
- **Long-nosed Snake (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*)**
Burrowing, deserts, creosotebush flats, under rocks, sotols, or in mammal burrows, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills (2 records for Basin); uncommon, nocturnal — rainy.
- **Big Bend Patch-nosed Snake (*Salvadora deserticola*)**
Desert lowlands, desert scrublands, creosotebush flats, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills (up to Panther Jct.); uncommon, diurnal.
- **Mountain Patch-nosed Snake (*Salvadora grahamiae*)**
Mountain slopes, plateaus, rocky canyons, open woodlands, scrublands, Chisos Mts. and foothills (down to Panther Jct.); uncommon, diurnal.
- **Western Ground Snake (*Sonora semiannulata*)**
Burrowing, scant vegetation, desert lowlands, river bottoms, rocky hillsides, creosotebush flats, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills (up to 5000 ft. in Green Gulch); secretive, numerous color phases and patterns, uncommon, nocturnal — windy hot dry nights.
- **Mexican Black-headed Snake (*Tantilla atriceps*)**
Burrowing, deserts, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, in crevices, under rocks, sotols, agaves, and yuccas, Giant Dagger Flats (probably at lower elevations) to foothills and Chisos Mts.; secretive, rear-langed, common, nocturnal.
- **Red (Big Bend) Black-headed Snake (*Tantilla rubra*)**
Burrowing, mountain habitat where pinyon, juniper, oak, agave, sotol, yucca, and nolina dominate, only Chisos Mts. (Basin, upper Green Gulch, and Panther Pass) and Volcanic Dike Overlook; two color-phases (collared and non-collared), secretive, rear-langed, possibly does not surface during dry years, known from only three Texas counties, extremely rare, nocturnal — following heavy rainfall.
- **Black-necked Garter Snake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis*)**
Semiaquatic, rock-inhabiting, canyons, pools, mountains, springs, tinajas, parkwide (down to Rio Grande) in the proper habitat but mainly Chisos Mts. and foothills; live-bearing, common, nocturnal or diurnal.
- **Checkered Garter Snake (*Thamnophis marcianus*)**
Semiaquatic, floodplains, permanent water, rivers, ponds, lakes, springs, pools, streams, only Rio Grande floodplain and its major tributaries (Tornillo and Terlingua Creeks); live-bearing, uncommon, nocturnal or diurnal.
- **Lyre Snake (*Trimorphodon bisculatus*)**
Rock-inhabiting, mountains, canyons, outcrops, Chisos Mts. and foothills (lowest records at Panther Jct., Volcanic Dike Overlook, and Grapevine Hills); secretive, rear-langed, extremely rare, nocturnal.
- **Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*)**
Rocky habitat: canyons, outcrops, mountains, and cane patches, parkwide (in the proper habitat); pit viper (poisonous), live-bearing, rare, nocturnal.
- **Western Diamondback Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*)**
Arid and semiarid regions: deserts, grasslands, brushlands, river bottoms, rocky canyons, Rio Grande floodplain to Chisos Mts. foothills (in Green Gulch up to about 4500 ft.); very aggressive, pit viper (poisonous), live-bearing, common, mostly nocturnal.
- **Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*)**
Rocky terrain: ledges, canyons, mountains, outcrops, slides, parkwide but most common in Chisos Mts. and foothills; pit viper (poisonous), live-bearing, very uncommon, nocturnal — sometimes diurnal.
- **Black-tailed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus*)**
Rock-inhabiting, mountains, canyons, outcrops, parkwide but most common in Chisos Mts. and foothills; pit viper (poisonous), live-bearing, common, nocturnal — sometimes diurnal.
- **Mojave Rattlesnake (*Crotalus scutulatus*)**
Low hot deserts, creosotebush flats, grasslands, Rio Grande floodplain to about 4000 ft. (up to Panther Junction); aggressive, pit viper (very poisonous), live-bearing, uncommon, nocturnal.

HYPOTHETICAL SPECIES

- **Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)**
Status uncertain; known only from a couple records from Panther Junction — possibly fish bait escapes; well established north of park.
- **Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*)**
Collected outside the park at Lajitas, Texas; reported calling along Rio Grande in park.
- **Texas Tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*)**
Recently several found at Basin and Rio Grande Village; probably releases or escapes from park visitors; native to south Texas.
- **Western Hognose Snake (*Heterodon nasicus*)**
A single park record from Panther Junction (possibly an escape); native to the grasslands north of the park.
- **Plains Black-headed Snake (*Tantilla nigriceps*)**
An unconfirmed record from the Basin; one specimen of questionable identity from Rio Grande Village; native to grasslands north of park.
- **Prairie Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*)**
One old park record; probably extirpated from park when grasses seriously depleted in earlier years; found north of park in grasslands.