

# Keep Texas Wild

## HONOR ROLL

Many state symbols represent the wild side of Texas.



### REPTILE

TEXAS HORNED LIZARD  
Adopted 1993

Who could resist this handsome fellow? Unfortunately, this state symbol is on the threatened list, meaning there aren't very many left in the wild. If you want to help, you can join the Texas Horned Lizard watch at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hornedlizards](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/hornedlizards).

### » FAVORED NEIGHBORS

IN 1782, OUR NATION'S leaders chose the bald eagle as our national emblem. Why? They wanted a symbol to represent freedom. As Texans, we have chosen many different symbols to represent our state's rich history, different cultures and abundant wildlife and plants. But imagine trying to pick one bird to represent more than 600 different species! Or one insect from 29,000 species! Sounds hard, right? With help from students like you along with citizens and special groups, our state legislators since 1901 have selected a state bird, state tree, state flower and many other special symbols. Let's find out what plants and animals represent our great state!

PHOTO © LARRY DITTO

### LONE STAR FLAG



Established 1845  
TEJAS  
(Caddo Indian word for Friends)



# » Texas Symbols

## TREE

PECAN  
Adopted 1919

SQUIRRELS, opossums, raccoons, birds and many other animals (including us!) eat the healthy nuts produced by pecan trees. Orchards in Texas produce an average of 60 million pounds of pecans annually.



## FLOWER

BLUEBONNET  
Adopted 1901

LOOK CLOSELY at the blue flowers that grow on upright stems. Some have white centers while others have purple centers. Why? White attracts pollinators like bees; purple means a bloom's already been pollinated!



## BIRD

MOCKINGBIRD  
Adopted 1927

WATCH OUT for this medium-sized bird with light gray feathers and a long tail. Mockingbirds may swoop down on you if you get close to their nest!

## MAMMAL (Large)

LONGHORN  
Adopted 1969

THESE EXTRA-TOUGH cattle with extra-long horns trace their beginnings to a mix of Spanish and English cattle brought to Texas by early settlers.

## PLANT

PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS  
Adopted 1995

LONG AGO, Native Americans ate the flat stems of this cactus after scraping away the thorns. They also ate the pear-shaped fruits called "tunas."





★  
**MAMMAL (Flying)**

**MEXICAN FREE-TAILED BAT**  
Adopted 1995

BRACKEN CAVE in Central Texas houses the world's largest group of Mexican free-tailed bats—some 20 million! Every night during the summer, they can eat as much as 250 tons of insects.



★  
**INSECT**

**MONARCH**  
Adopted 1995

MONARCHS flutter through Texas twice a year. In the fall, they fly as many as 3,000 miles to reach warmer temperatures in Central Mexico. In the spring, they return north, laying eggs along the way.



★  
**AMPHIBIAN**

**TEXAS TOAD**  
Adopted 2009

THIS CHUBBY brown toad about 3 inches long burrows in the dirt to stay moist. Males sing loudly to attract a mate.



★  
**SHRUB (Native)**

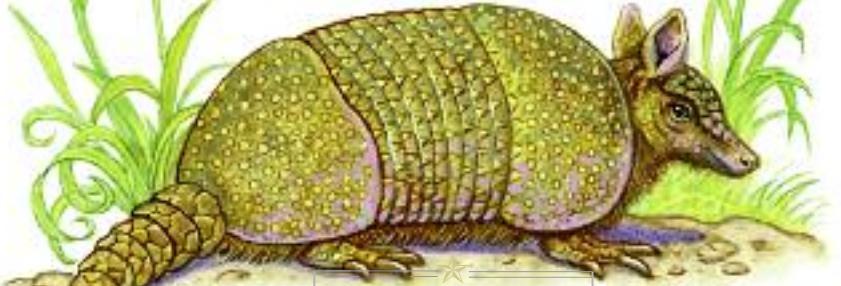
**TEXAS PURPLE SAGE**  
Adopted 2005

PURPLE BLOSSOMS often cover this silver-leaved shrub right before or after a rain. It provides cover for wildlife and nest sites for birds.

★  
**GRASS**

**SIDEOATS GRAMA**  
Adopted 1971

CATTLE and other wildlife eat the bluish-green leaves of this native grass. In the fall, leaves turn reddish-orange. Guess what the seeds look like?  
Yes, oats!



★  
**MAMMAL (Small)**

**ARMADILLO**  
Adopted 1995

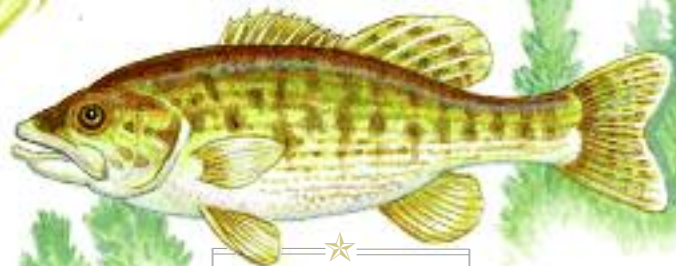
MEET THE WORLD'S ONLY mammal that wears a hard shell! Armadillos mainly eat worms, beetles and other insects at night, but you may spot one out during the day.



★  
**REPTILE**

**TEXAS HORNED LIZARD**  
Adopted 1993

SPINY AND FLAT-BODIED, Texas horned lizards eat mainly red harvester ants but also grasshoppers, beetles and spiders. When threatened, they can hiss, inflate their bodies and squirt blood from their eyes.



★  
**FISH**

**GUADALUPE BASS**  
Adopted 1989

GUADALUPE BASS live nowhere else but in a few Texas rivers. They measure up to 12 inches and may live up to seven years.





# Spike's Activity Page



## >> HOMETOWN HEROES

DID YOU KNOW THAT STUDENTS (LIKE YOU!) at Danbury Elementary School worked to get the Texas toad named as our state amphibian? "The students worked with a Texas Parks and Wildlife biologist, who recommended five amphibians they might consider," says librarian Ace Filipp. "Then the class researched the animals and campaigned for their favorite by making posters and commercials." After a campus-wide election, the Texas toad won, beating the barred tiger salamander, Strecker's chorus frog, the cliff chirping frog and the Houston toad. From there, the students worked with their local state lawmakers. In 2009, the state Legislature approved the Texas toad as our state amphibian. Gov. Rick Perry agreed, too. You're never too young to make a difference!



PHOTO © BILL DRAKER / ROLENPCOM

## >> WILD SCIENCE

SURE, the horned lizard is the state reptile, but what exactly is a reptile? All animals are grouped by characteristics. Identify these drawings of state symbols and see if you can match them with the descriptions that best match them.

**INSECTS**  
Have antennae and six legs; bodies have three sections

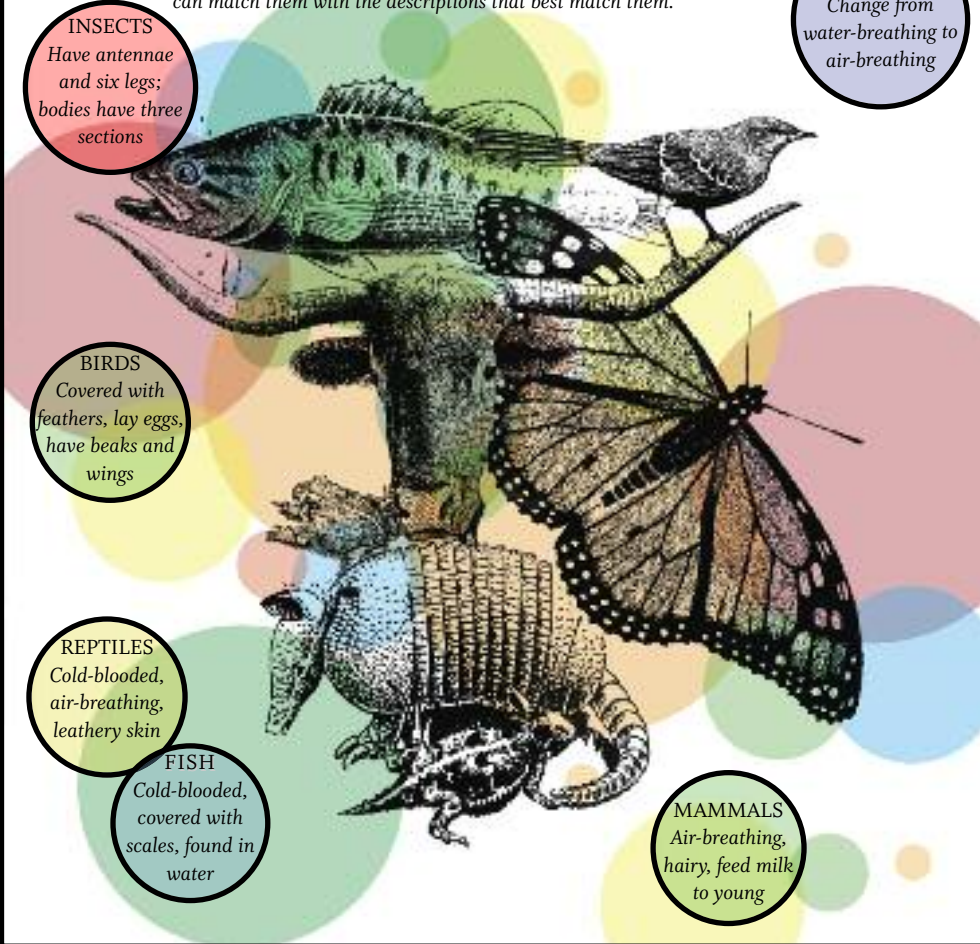
**BIRDS**  
Covered with feathers, lay eggs, have beaks and wings

**REPTILES**  
Cold-blooded, air-breathing, leathery skin

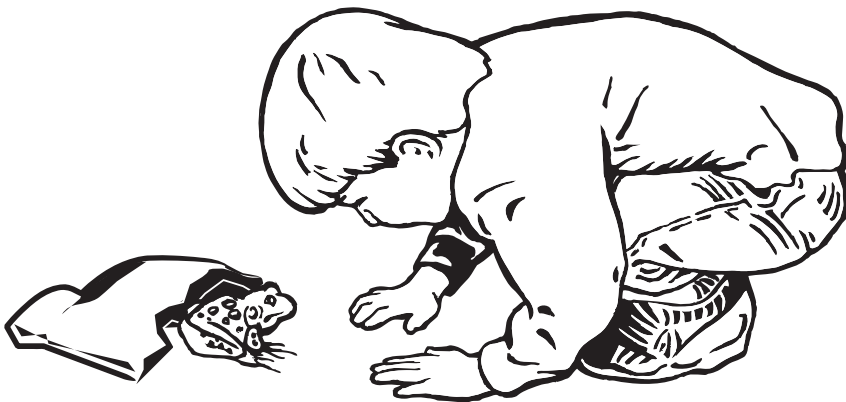
**FISH**  
Cold-blooded, covered with scales, found in water

**MAMMALS**  
Air-breathing, hairy, feed milk to young

**AMPHIBIANS**  
Change from water-breathing to air-breathing



## >> KEEPING IT WILD



**FIND OUT WHICH "WILD" state symbols live in your area. What can you do to protect them or help others appreciate them? For instance, you can make a "toad house" for your yard. Find an old clay pot (broken or whole) and bury it halfway in the soil in a spot that's hidden among plants. If you like, set out a shallow saucer filled with water. Toads drink by soaking water through their skin. Maybe you could plant a pecan tree at your school? Or plant milkweeds for monarchs?**

## NEXT MONTH: Nature's Cleanup Crews



## TEACHER RESOURCE

Visit [www.tpwmagazine.com](http://www.tpwmagazine.com) to download a printable PDF, access lesson plans, find additional resources or order copies.

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