

# Keep Texas Wild



## Predator vs. Prey

Horror Movie or Fast Food Feast?



*Daring  
jumping spider  
with a juicy insect  
for dinner*

### WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Lucky us: By the time our stomachs start to growl, we can head to the refrigerator or pick up something tasty at our favorite drive-through. Life's a little harder for most of our four-legged friends. There's no grocery store or restaurant nearby to fill their empty stomachs. They have to catch their dinner or they will starve. Many times they have babies to feed. Some hungry hunters are called predators, which means that they kill other animals (prey) to eat.

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# » PREDATORS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES



**Pitcher plant**

PHOTO © KATHY ADAMS CLARK/KAC PRODUCTIONS



**Alligator**

PHOTOS BY TPWD



**Cougar**



**Osprey**

PHOTO © ROLF NUSSBAUMER



**Spider**



**Shark**



**Praying mantis**

PHOTO © WYMAN MEINZER



**TALONS**

The barn owl uses these super sharp, long talons to reach through grass and brush to grab a mouse.



*It's not easy being a predator. Prey escapes most of the time. What if the local pizza delivery rang your doorbell every night, but the box was empty every day except Tuesday? Lots of disappointment and empty stomachs!*

ILLUSTRATIONS © FIAN ARROYO

**Sometimes the predator becomes the prey. Imagine a spider, sitting on its intricate web, waiting for a delicious fly to land. Up hops a frog, flicking out its long, sticky tongue, and suddenly ... the spider now becomes the prey!**





## Barn owl

### LOW LIGHT SIGHT

Since the barn owl hunts mostly at night, his large eyes provide excellent low-light vision.

### MISMATCHED EARS

Since one ear is a little higher than the other, barn owls have stereo hearing, both side-to-side and up-and-down.

### SPECIAL FEATHERS

Special feathers on the front of their wings help barn owls fly silently so their prey can't hear them.

### Baby barn owls

PHOTO BY TPWD

## BARN OWL

Barn owls eat more than their weight in food (mostly mice and rats) every day. If they didn't, these rodents might eat all the food in our fields and warehouses.

### White-footed mouse

OWLMOUSE © ROLF NUSSBAUMER

## HUMANS ARE PREDATORS, TOO.

ILLUSTRATION BY TPWD



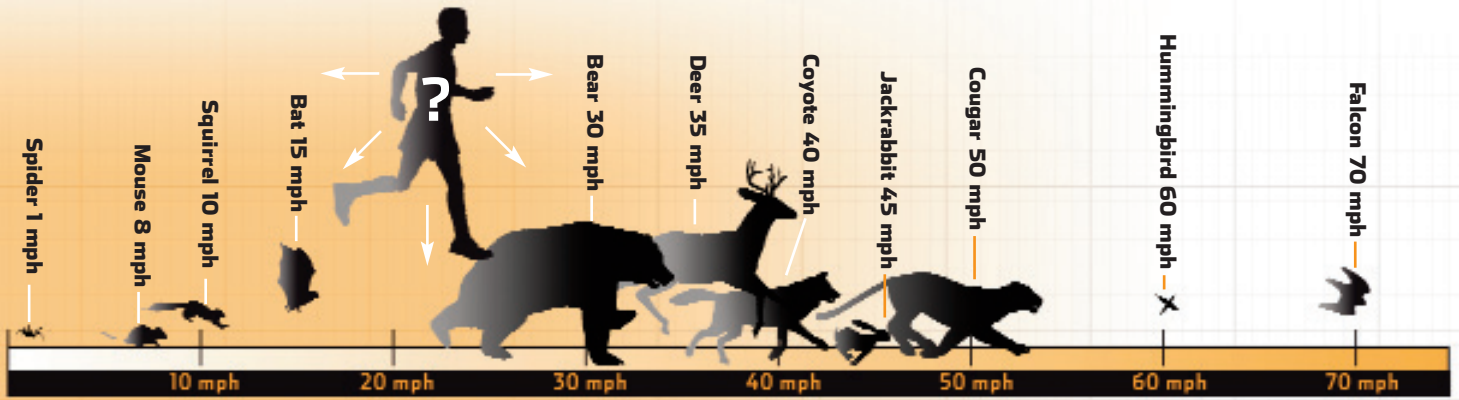
Long before we could pick up a bucket of fried chicken or a bag of cheeseburgers and fries, people used weapons and traps to catch their food. We still do, every time we hunt or fish.







Speed is an important factor in who eats and who gets eaten. A few of the fastest athletes in the world can run a mile in four minutes. How many miles per hour is that? You might be a little slower than that, so which of these animals do you think could catch you, and which ones could you catch?



## >> WILD ART

Invent a new animal that could be the perfect predator. Give it a name and draw it. For example, it might have the eyes of an eagle, the speed of a cougar and the tusks of a javelina – a cougletina! You can even create the perfect prey to escape from your new super predator.



## >> KEEPING



Make a list of all the predators (birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and insects) you might find in your backyard or at your neighborhood park. What habitat do they need? Tell your friends about why predators are important.

## NEXT MONTH: Hanging around with bats!



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### TEACHER RESOURCE

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