



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Texas Kangaroo Rat

Arlington, Texas Ecological Services Field Office

Texas Kangaroo Rat

Dipodomys elator

Description

The Texas kangaroo rat is a small brown mammal with a white belly, named for its hind feet that resemble that of a kangaroo. There are four additional species of kangaroo rats found in Texas: Banner-tailed, Gulf Coast, Merriam's, and Ord's. The Texas kangaroo rat is significantly larger in size compared to the Ord's kangaroo rat, the only species that overlaps its range. The Texas kangaroo rat can grow up to 13 ¾ inches in length including its long tail;



Texas Kangaroo Rat Roadside Habitat
(Photo Credit- Dr. Allan Nelson)

the next largest species, Ord's kangaroo rat, is about 10 ½ inches long. The Texas kangaroo rat is also distinguishable by its four-toed hind feet, whereas Ord's is five-toed. Like other species of kangaroo rats, it is nocturnal, meaning that most of its activity occurs at night.

Distribution

The Texas kangaroo rat has been documented in 11 North Central counties of Texas: Archer, Baylor, Childress, Clay, Cottle, Foard, Hardeman, Montague, Motley, Wichita and Wilbarger. They were historically documented in Comanche



Texas Kangaroo Rat - (Photo Credit- Dr. Allan Nelson)

and Cotton County in southwest Oklahoma. The sandy soil along the Red River is believed to be a natural barrier preventing the Texas kangaroo rat from reestablishing in the southwestern portion of Oklahoma. Although it is possible that relic populations still occur in the state.

Life History

The Texas kangaroo rat is reproductively active from February to August producing two or three young per litter. Litters are most common during early spring and autumn. The young begin to leave the den at three weeks of age. They primarily eat small seeds but may also eat other plant material. The life span for this small mammal is believed to be about 2 years under natural conditions.

Habitat

Texas kangaroo rat is found in areas with firm clay soils supporting short grass and scattered mesquite brush land. This open habitat gives them the bare areas needed for dust bathing. Similar to other species of kangaroo rats, adults create burrows with many subterranean tunnels and multiple

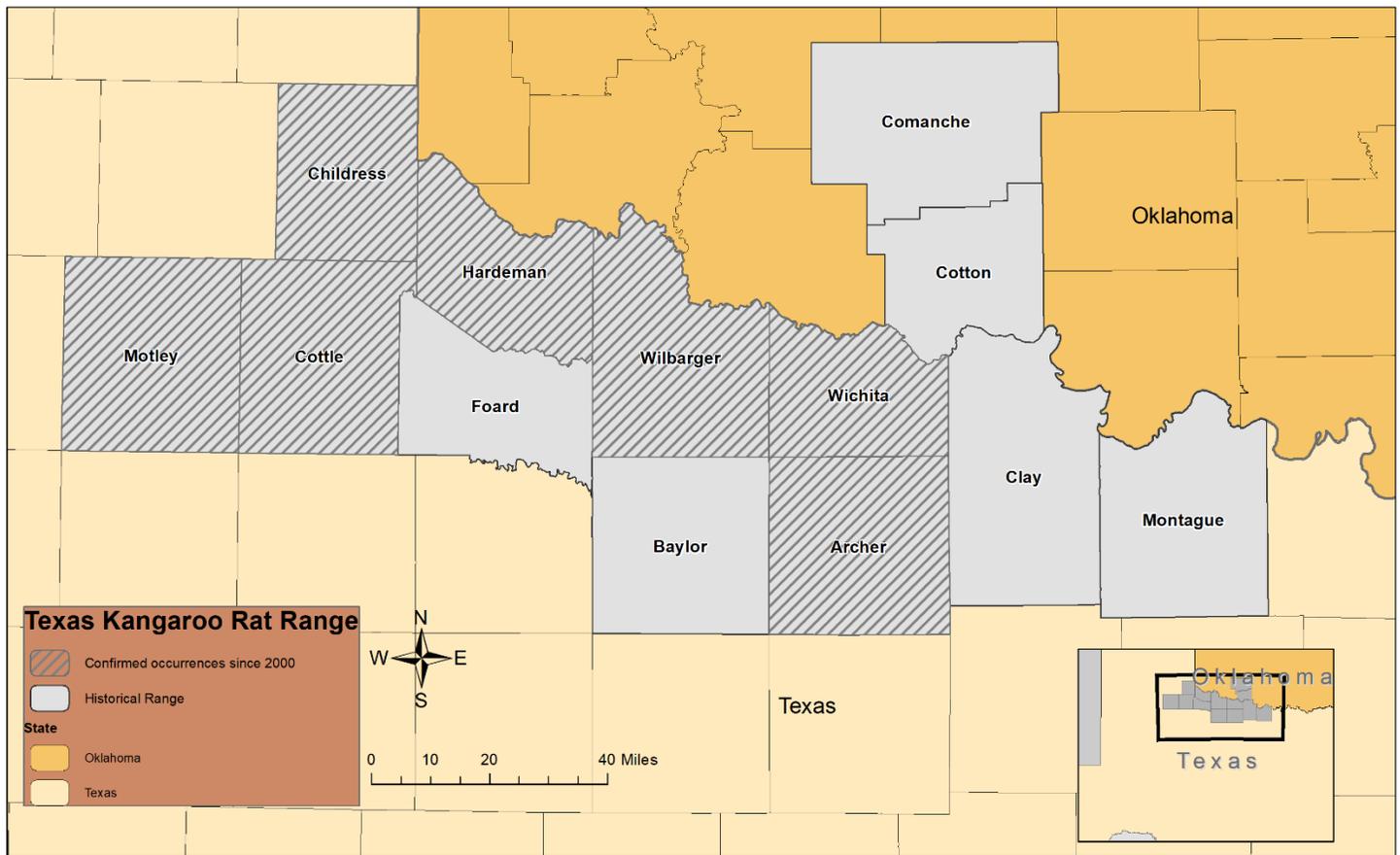
exits. These dens have multiple oval openings and usually occur in areas not prone to flooding.

Conservation

In 2010, the Texas kangaroo rat was petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. A 90-day finding in 2011 found that the petition presented substantial scientific information indicating that listing the species as threatened or endangered may be warranted. Currently, the Texas kangaroo rat is not protected under federal law. It is however protected as a nongame species under Texas regulations.



Den Entrance
(Photo Credit- Dr. Allan Nelson)



Counties in Texas and Oklahoma where the Texas kangaroo rat has been documented.

References

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