



THE LARGEST STATE IN THE CONTINENTAL U.S. and second only to California in terms of biodiversity, Texas has a rich variety of species, habitats and cultural communities that make it a special place. However, protecting the state's wealth of native animals and plants is uniquely challenging because 97% of the land in Texas is privately owned. Recognizing the ecological significance of the state's wildlife and the importance of investing in rural and urban communities, Defenders works in high-priority areas to maximize benefits for wildlife, habitat and people.



TEXAS HILL COUNTRY © MARTINA/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Permian Basin: Life Among the Dunes

The Permian Basin, a vast sedimentary basin in western Texas and southeastern New Mexico, contains one of the largest oil and gas reserves in the world. Drilling and extraction by fracking in the region are compromising habitat for resident wildlife and threatening the long-term integrity of the West Texas aquifers that sustain life and the area's economy.

To meet challenges like the rampant fossil fuel development in the basin, Defenders champions the integration of science into decision-making and develops and applies technical tools and other innovative solutions to improve conservation outcomes.

Species Spotlight: Dunes Sagebrush Lizard

As oil and gas wells proliferate across the Permian Basin, fracking activity is degrading the habitat of the dunes sagebrush lizard, a rare species found only in the basin's shinnery oak dunes. To protect the lizard and other wildlife, Defenders is engaging with state and federal partners and employing a state-of-the-art spatial analysis tool we developed to track habitat loss

in real time. Our goal is to devise strategies and on-the-ground conservation measures to save the vulnerable dunes sagebrush lizard and conserve biodiversity amid unprecedented oil and gas extraction.

Texas Hill Country: Deep in the Heart

The Texas Hill Country sits atop the Edwards Plateau, a geographic region at the crossroads of the high plains to the west and north and the lower-lying coastal plains to the south and east. Located in the heart of Texas, this region, which is known for its scenic hills, canyons, rugged terrain and vast network of rivers and creeks, is home to numerous imperiled species—and to rapid urbanization and oil and gas pipelines.

Defenders works in this dynamic area to conserve and restore habitats and watersheds for wildlife. We partner with landowners, community organizations and state and federal agencies. We also identify and apply conservation tools that can help attain our shared goals of preserving the region's ecological integrity for future generations of Texans.

Species Spotlight: Golden-cheeked Warbler

One of the most rapidly growing urban corridors in the U.S. traverses the Texas Hill Country. It stretches over 100 miles between the San Antonio and Austin metropolitan areas and through old-growth juniper,

DUNES SAGEBRUSH LIZARD © MARK WATSON



GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER/US ARMY ENVIRONMENTAL COMMAND



OCELOT © JOEL SARTORE/WWW.JOELSARTORE.COM

oak and shrubland habitats. This is the only place in the world where the endangered golden-cheeked warbler breeds. Defenders and its allies are fighting to defend federal endangered species protection for this rare migratory bird that winters in southern Mexico and Central America. We are working with Defenders' Center for Conservation Innovation to assess the loss of its breeding habitat and to protect what remains.

Borderlands: From Desert to Coast

The Texas borderlands is not a unified ecological region, but a political region spanning a diversity of habitats along the Rio Grande from the dry west Texas mountains near El Paso to the lush neotropical vegetation along the banks of the river as it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Defenders' border work in Texas centers on the Lower Rio Grande Valley and its network of national wildlife refuges, including Laguna Atascosa, Santa Ana and Lower Rio Grande Valley.

To protect the small patches of remaining habitat so important to wildlife in this area, Defenders works to prevent border wall construction in protected and sensitive areas and to strengthen the habitat restoration goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Along the coast, we focus on protecting vital wetland and terrestrial habitats from industrial development like liquefied natural gas terminals.

Species Spotlight: Ocelot

Ocelots once ranged from the southwestern states to as far east as Louisiana. Today no more than 60 remain in the U.S., split into two small populations in South Texas. These wild cats face many challenges, including encroaching development, roads and expanding oil and gas export infrastructure. Defenders is partnering with federal and state agencies, community groups, local organizations and landowners in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to protect and restore ocelot populations and to ensure that ample habitat is available to support their recovery.



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