



## INTERACTIONS WITH URBAN WILDLIFE

### Introduction

Dyess Air Force Base (Dyess) is in the western part of Texas. It is just under 6,000 acres with roughly 2,500 acres of natural, undeveloped areas. The location of Dyess presents a unique living situation for both humans and wildlife due to the wildland urban interface (WUI). The WUI is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. Living and working in the WUI increases sightings of wildlife. The purpose of this document is to provide education to base personnel on potential interactions with urban wildlife at Dyess.



Painted Bunting



Texas Horned Lizard



Black-tailed Jackrabbit



### Dyess Natural Resources

Dyess is in the Rolling Plains Ecological Region of Texas and is mainly comprised of Honey Mesquite/Juniper Woodlands, Mixed Grass Prairies, and Riparian Habitats along Little Elm Creek. The diversity in habitats provides an excellent home for a large number of native wildlife, including a diverse group of migratory songbirds, migratory waterfowl, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Species include, but are not limited to, Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*), Golden-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*), Cinnamon Teal (*Spatula cyanoptera*), Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*), Rio Grande Ground Squirrel (*Ictidomys parvidens*), Texas Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*), and American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*).

Although these species may not interact in the WUI, they play a crucial role in the Dyess environment. Managing wildlife and their habitats is the responsibility of the Natural Resources Program Manager, working under the Environmental Section within the 7th Civil Engineer Squadron.

### Common Species Encountered in the WUI

- Coyote - *Canis latrans* (page 2)
- Grey Fox - *Urocyon cinereoargenteus* (page 3)
- Raccoon - *Procyon lotor* (page 4)
- Bobcat - *Lynx rufus* (page 5)
- Western Diamondback Rattlesnake - *Crotalus atrox* (page 6)

# Coyote - *Canis latrans*



## Natural History

Coyotes are native to the rolling plains ecological region and have existed in the area long before Dyess was established.

Due to the extirpation of other predators such as wolves and bears, Coyotes now serve as the top predator in the local food chain.

Coyotes are omnivores and feed on small mammals, fruits, insects, carrion, human trash, pet food, etc.

Coyotes benefit native habitats on Dyess by controlling rodents and small mammals such as skunks and raccoons.

## Species Identification

- Adults weigh 25 – 40 pounds
- Bushy tail with black tip
- Fur color is a mixture of black, gray, and tan
- Typically observed alone or in a pair
- Most active at dawn or dusk



## Identifying Nuisance Coyote Behavior

- Following a person
- Walking around housing, BX, offices, dorms or the flightline midday
- Acting lethargic
- Appears disoriented
- Looks sickly or has mange

## Reporting

### If bit, attacked, or in danger, call 911

**Nuisance Coyote in Military Family Housing:** call the Balfour Beatty Communities maintenance office at (325) 793-9800. See “Additional Reporting” below.

**Nuisance Coyote NOT in Military Family Housing:** call the Pest Management – 7 CES Customer Service Unit at (325) 696-4154. See “Additional Reporting” below.

**Coyote on Airfield or Apron:** call the 7 BW Flight Safety / BASH office at (325) 669-5208.

**Additional reporting:** Send an email to [7CES.CEIE.Environmental@us.af.mil](mailto:7CES.CEIE.Environmental@us.af.mil). Include details such as date, time, location, how did the coyote look, what happened during the interaction, etc.

## Safety Tips

Tips to prevent coyote interactions, and what to do if a nuisance Coyote (unusual acting or aggressive) is encountered. Attacking humans is rare and not likely to happen.

- Never intentionally feed coyotes
- Keep pets on a leash and inside at night
- Avoid leaving trash or food (including petfood) outside your building or house
- Do NOT turn your back and run if approached
- Get Big and Loud if approached
- Report an incident as soon as possible

# Gray Fox - *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*



## Natural History

The Gray Fox is native to Texas and can be found across the state.

They benefit from habitat edges created by humans, including urban areas and cleared farmland.

Gray Foxes are excellent climbers and can be found scaling large trees and cliff faces. This is an unusual trait for canids that makes this species unique.

They typically feed on small mammals, birds, and berries. They will be opportunistic in urban areas and feed on left out pet food and trash.

## Species Identification

- Adults weigh 6 - 15 pounds
- Gray, white, and black fur with a rusty color on the edges and black streak down the tail
- Typically observed at dawn or dusk
- Long bushy tail
- Can be found hunting the edges of woodlands and urban habitats at night
- Dens in hollow trees, stumps, or old structures



## Safety Tips

Tips to prevent Gray Fox interactions and what to do if a fox is acting unusual or aggressive. They are not likely to attack or interact with humans.

- Do not leave trash or pet food out
- Never intentionally feed Grey Foxes
- Keep small dogs and cats inside at night
- If approached get Big and Loud
- Do NOT turn your back and run

## Reporting

**If bit, attacked, or in danger, call 911**

### **Nuisance Gray Fox in Military Family**

**Housing:** call the Balfour Beatty Communities maintenance office at (325) 793-9800.

### **Nuisance Gray Fox NOT in Military Family**

**Housing:** call the Pest Management – 7 CES Customer Service Unit at (325) 696-4154.

**Gray Fox on Airfield or Apron:** call the 7 BW Flight Safety / BASH office at (325) 669-5208.

# Raccoon - *Procyon lotor*

## Natural History

Raccoons are intelligent and curious creatures. These traits help them survive in the wild but also can make for annoying neighbors.

They are almost exclusively nocturnal and have excellent night vision.

Their diet consists of fruits, insects, fish, small rodents, amphibians, bird eggs, and human garbage.

Their habitat preferences are brushy or wooded areas near streams, lakes, or swamps. They can be found in or close to developed areas if sufficient food, water, and cover are accessible.



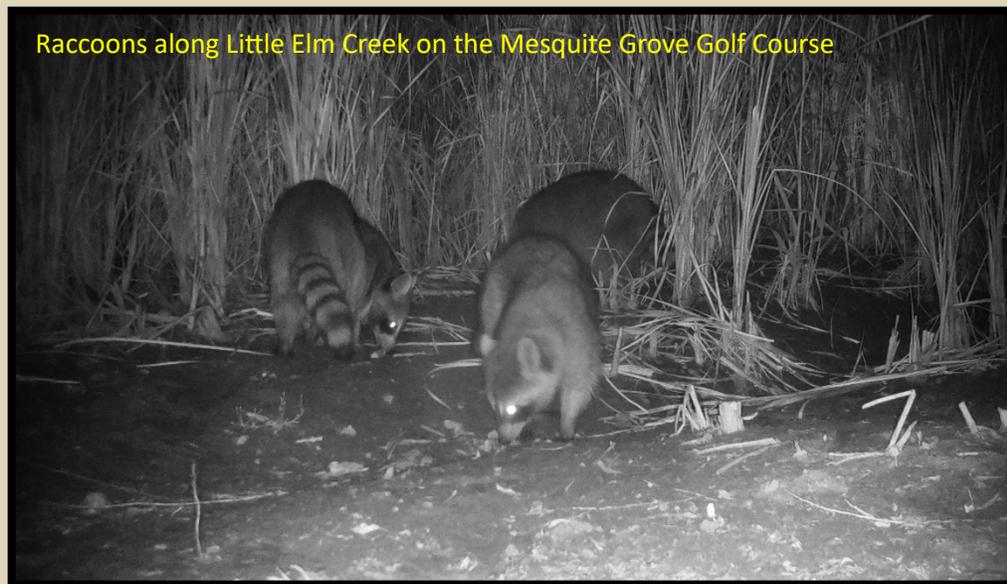
## Species Identification

- Adults weigh on average 7 – 20 pounds
- Stocky with short legs and small rounded ears
- Grey fur with dark black markings around their eyes and black bands on their tail

## Safety Tips

Tips on how to reduce Raccoon and human interactions and what to do if approached by a raccoon. Raccoon attacks are very rare and not likely to happen.

- Do not leave trash or food out or where it is easily accessible
- Ensure there are no openings on buildings or roofs
- Do not leave pet food outside
- If approached by a Raccoon, get Big and Loud



## Reporting

**If bit, attacked, or in danger, call 911**

### **Nuisance Raccoons in Military Family**

**Housing:** call the Balfour Beatty Communities maintenance office at (325) 793-9800.

### **Nuisance Raccoons NOT in Military Family**

**Housing:** call the Pest Management – 7 CES Customer Service Unit at (325) 696-4154.

**Raccoons on Airfield or Apron:** call the 7 BW Flight Safety / BASH office at (325) 669-5208.

# Bobcat - *Lynx rufus*



## Natural History

The Bobcat is found throughout the state of Texas.

Bobcats are typically a more reclusive species, rarely showing themselves to humans.

Their diet consists of small mammals and birds. They will occasionally kill large animals such as white-tailed deer. In urban areas, they will also prey upon pets and chickens.

They can utilize a variety of habitats but, on Dyess, favor dense brush and mesquite woodlands.

## Species Identification

- Adults weigh on average 20 pounds
- A reddish-brown coat with black spots or streaks throughout their bodies
- A short stubby tail that is white on the underside

## Safety Tips

Tips to discourage Bobcats from lingering around structures.

- Keep bushes and brush trimmed to prevent dense cover for them to hide in
- Do not leave pets outdoors
- Do not leave petfood or water outside



Bobcat walking across frozen Little Elm Creek on Dyess



Bobcat in mesquite/juniper woodland on Dyess

## Reporting

**If bit, attacked, or in danger, call 911**

### Nuisance Bobcat in Military Family

**Housing:** call the Balfour Beatty Communities maintenance office at (325) 793-9800.

### Nuisance Bobcat NOT in Military Family

**Housing:** call the Pest Management – 7 CES Customer Service Unit at (325) 696-4154.

**Bobcat on Airfield or Apron:** call the 7 BW Flight Safety / BASH office at (325) 669-5208.

# Western Diamondback Rattlesnake - *Crotalus atrox*

## Natural History

There are 10 species of rattlesnake in Texas. The Western Diamondback is the most common and widespread across the state.

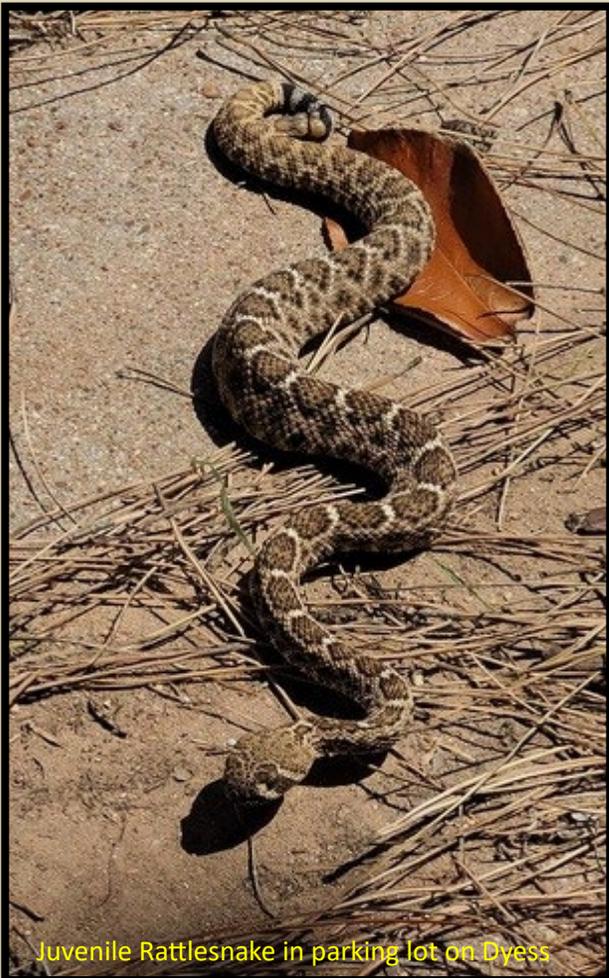
These snakes are venomous and, if a person or pet is bitten, it is a medical emergency.

They primarily feed on rodents.

They can be observed using sidewalks, roads, and sides of buildings to keep warm in spring and fall.

## Species Identification

- Diamond-shaped head
- Dark, diamond-shaped pattern down the middle of the back
- Black and white bands around the tail
- Brown rattles on tail
- Tan to grey in color
- Adults are 4 – 6 feet in length



## Safety Tips

Tips to reduce the likelihood of rattlesnake encounters.

- Always stay on designated trails or sidewalks
- Do not stick hands in areas that cannot be seen
- Always wear closed toe shoes while outside
- Keep garden and flower beds maintained
- Never approach or pickup snakes
- If you hear a warning rattle, move away from the sound without making sudden movements

## Reporting

**If bit, attacked, or in danger, call 911**

**Nuisance Rattlesnake in Military Family**

**Housing:** call the Balfour Beatty Communities maintenance office at (325) 793-9800.

**Nuisance Rattlesnake NOT in Military Family**

**Housing:** call the Pest Management – 7 CES Customer Service Unit at (325) 696-4154.

**Rattlesnake on Airfield or Apron:** call the 7 BW Flight Safety / BASH office at (325) 669-5208.

Juvenile Rattlesnake in parking lot on Dyess

## **Definitions**

Ecological Region (Ecoregion) – areas where ecosystems (and the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources) are generally similar. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Mange – is a contagious skin disease, characterized by crusty, pruritic dermatitis and hair/feather loss, and caused by a variety of parasitic mites burrowing in or living in the skin. (USDA APHIS)

Nuisance Wildlife – an animal that is destructive or menacing. The animal may be damaging property such as buildings, crops, pets, livestock, gardens, or public parks. Wildlife may threaten human health or safety by spreading diseases, through direct attacks, or accidentally because of collisions with cars, airplanes, or trains. (Extension Foundation / USDA)

Omnivore – feeding on both animal and vegetable substances. (Merriam Webster)

Riparian – Relating to or livening or located on the bank of a natural watercourse (such as a river) or sometimes of a lake or a tidewater. (Merriam Webster)

Rolling Plains Ecological Region – This is a gently rolling region containing rangelands broken with streams and rivers running from west to east, draining toward the Cross Timbers and Prairies Region to the east and southeast. The Rolling Plains Ecological Region is bordered on the south by the Edwards Plateau Ecological Region and on the west by the High Plains Ecological Region. Soils vary from fine sand to clays and clay loams. Native grasses include little bluestem, blue grama, sideoats grama, Indiangrass, and sand bluestem. Many rangelands in this region have been invaded by annual and perennial forbs, legumes, and woody species due to historic livestock grazing practices and lack of naturally occurring fire on the landscape. Dominant woody species include redberry juniper, yucca, mesquite, lotebush, hackberry, bumelia, pricklypear, skunkbush sumac, ephedra, plum, western soapberry, little leaf sumac, shin oak, tasajillo, agarito, catclaw acacia, lime pricklyash, sand sage, and others. Mesquite grasslands dominate vast areas of this ecological region. Bottomlands along larger streams contain American elm, button willow, pecan, and cottonwood. Limestone ridges and steep terrains offer greater woody plant diversity and habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department)

Venom – a toxic substance produced by some animals (such as snakes, scorpions, or bees) that is injected into prey or an enemy chiefly by biting or stinging and has an injurious or lethal effect. (Merriam Webster)

Venomous – producing venom in a specialized gland and capable of inflicting injury or death. (Merriam Webster)

Wildland Urban Interface – is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. It is the line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. (U.S. Fire Administration)

## **Points of Contact**

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