



Save Our Texas Treasures

Defenders of Wildlife Texas



Named for its rolling hills, the Hill Country's landscape is shaped by aquifers and springs that channel groundwater. These essential waters are home to several **Texas Treasures** (aquatic wildlife), found nowhere else. Known for their vulnerable, permeable skin, salamanders are exceptional indicators of ecosystem health. The **Texas blind salamander**, **Austin blind salamander**, **Jollyville Plateau salamander**, and **Barton Springs salamander** all depend on a constant supply of clean, cool water from aquifers and springs. Deep in the depths of aquifers lives another kind of indicator species, a more unique animal. While the **Toothless blindcat** and **Widemouth blindcat** dwell in the Edwards aquifer and the **Mexican blindcat** dives within the Edwards-Trinity aquifer, all three have fully adapted to total darkness. As their name implies, they are eyeless catfishes that lack skin pigmentation since they are not exposed to sunlight. These bizarre, yet charming creatures are top predators in their ecosystems and are important indicators of the health of our groundwater. Save Our Texas Treasures aims to raise awareness around unique Texas aquatic species, promote education of water conservation actions, and advocate for the protection of these imperiled aquifer and spring dwellers.

What are **TEXAS TREASURES**?

Texas Treasures are unique and imperiled aquatic wildlife found in Texas with a restricted and limited habitat. Throughout their range, Texas Treasures prefer clean cool aquatic habitats, from deep aquifers in Central and South Texas to springs and cave systems in the Texas Hill Country.

These species include:



Texas Treasures are an aquatic indicator species that measure the state of local environmental conditions such as water quality

- Texas blind salamander (*Eurycea rathbuni*)
- Austin blind salamander (*Eurycea waterlooensis*)
- Jollyville Plateau salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*)
- Barton Springs salamander (*Eurycea sosorum*)
- Toothless blindcat (*Trogloglanis pattersoni*)
- Widemouth blindcat (*Satan eurystomus*)
- Mexican blindcat (*Prietella phreatophila*).

The absorbent skin of Texas Treasures makes them extremely sensitive to changes in the environment and can give scientists valuable insight into how an ecosystem is functioning.

THREATS TO SURVIVAL

- There are two main threats to the survival of salamanders and blindcats: habitat loss and degradation.
- Aquatic habitats are often degraded by contamination of pesticides and herbicides in water systems.
- Texas Treasures are experiencing habitat loss to make way for development which can often result in soil erosion, over-pumping of aquifers, and reduced groundwater supplies.



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WHAT IS DEFENDERS DOING?

- Fighting to maintain the Endangered Species Act and other protections for Texas Treasures and other imperiled wildlife.
- Organizing education, outreach, and conservation activities in the Texas Hill Country and throughout the state to ensure that Texas Treasures can coexist alongside human communities.
- Collaborating with private, state, and federal partners to improve and protect the habitat necessary to ensure Texas Treasures' future in Texas.
- Raising public awareness of Texas Treasures in Texas, including the threats they face and best practices for protecting and coexisting with them.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

- Help Defenders raise awareness of Texas Treasures presence in Texas.
- Follow us on social media and share Texas Treasures-related content and actions with your friends and followers.
- Speak up for Texas Treasures and continued support of the Endangered Species Act and other protections for imperiled wildlife.
- Advocate for better groundwater planning and wildlife management in Texas waterways.
- Support efforts to protect private, state, and federal lands that are prime habitat for Texas Treasures.
- Raise your voice against encroaching development, agriculture runoff, and the expansion of dams in sensitive areas of Texas.

IF YOU LIVE NEAR TEXAS TREASURE WATERWAYS

- Practice water conservation at home by turning off the water while washing dishes or brushing teeth, only run washing machine when full, water your yard before 11 AM or after 7 PM, check for leaks in toilets and sinks, use a timer for your hose, and keep showers 5 minutes or less.
- Implement rain gardens and native landscaping to help reduce water used for irrigation.
- Dispose of hazardous waste properly.
- When visiting springs, be mindful of wildlife habitat, limit disturbances, and dispose of trash properly.