

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The Texas Kangaroo Rat



Photo: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

A RARE HOPPER

Human activity has pushed Texas kangaroo rat populations into tiny pockets of the animals' former range. These kangaroo rats once inhabited at least 15 counties in Texas and Oklahoma along the Red River. The hoppers are now completely extinct from Oklahoma. They can only be found in six Texas counties; only three of those counties have noteworthy populations. Federal protection for Texas kangaroo rats could bring the diminished and degraded prairie back to life and ensure habitat for Texas kangaroo rats.

PROTECTING THE SOUTHERN PRAIRIE

The farming, cattle grazing, and land development of the past 150 years have completely destroyed or altered nearly all Texas kangaroo rat natural habitat. Humans have killed off the bison and prairie dogs and have long extinguished the natural fires that created and maintained the open grasslands and shrublands Texas kangaroo rats need to survive.

KNOW YOUR RAT

- Home on the Range: Texas kangaroo rats thrive in open grasslands and shrublands that have sparse vegetation or even bare ground.
- Everything is Connected: Texas kangaroo rats benefited from bison grazing and wallowing and landscapes colonized by prairie dogs. Both bison and prairie dogs are considered "keystone" species or "ecosystem engineers," meaning they create habitat for a variety of other wildlife, including Texas kangaroo rats.
- Rough and Tumble: A single kangaroo rat bound can reach over one meter (roughly 1 yard). Though sweet-looking, they can be fierce fighters. The kangaroo rats jump on opponents and puncture them with their back toes. Texas kangaroo rats also like to take dust baths to keep themselves clean and their fur healthy.

CLIMATE CHAOS

Scientists predict that Texas kangaroo rats will lose 48-80 percent of their already shrunken habitat in less than 40 years due to climate change.

