

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Animal Abstract

Element Code: ARACF12010

Data Sensitivity: No

CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE

NAME: *Phrynosoma cornutum*

COMMON NAME: Texas Horned Lizard

SYNONYMS:

FAMILY: Sauria:Iguanidae

AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION: Harlan, 1825.

TYPE LOCALITY: Great Plains, east of the Rocky Mountains.

TYPE SPECIMEN:

TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS: Fourteen species in genus, from British Columbia to Guatemala and from Arkansas to the Pacific Coast.

DESCRIPTION: A dorsolaterally flattened lizard with a toad-like body. Their size ranges from 2.5-5.0 inches (6.4-13.0 cm) snout-vent; females larger than males. The general body color is brownish to yellow-brown to reddish-brown; ground color varies with prevailing soil color. Dark stripes radiate from the eye in a "sun-burst"; vertebral stripe is pale. Sooty to dark brown blotches occur on the neck, back, and tail. Two central horns occur at the back of the head (giving it its name), and are notably long and sharp. There is a row of enlarged scales on each side of the throat, surrounded by small scales. Two rows of pointed fringe scales occur along each side of the body. The eardrums are distinct, and the belly scales are weakly keeled.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: *Phrynosoma cornutum* is the only species of horned lizard to have dark brown stripes that radiate downward from the eyes and across the top of the head. The Regal Horned Lizard (*P. solare*) has 4 large horns at the bases that touch at the back of the head, and the Desert Horned Lizard (*P. platyrhinos*) has a single rather than a double row of pointed fringe scales on each side of the body.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Black and white drawing (Stebbins 1966: plate 18)

Color photo (Behler and King 1979: plate 340)

Color photos (Texas Parks & Wildlife web site

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/nature/wild/reptile)

Color photos and distribution map (Texas A&M Agri. Progm.

<http://enrp.tamu.edu/hot/endangered/part-3.13.html>)

TOTAL RANGE: Kansas south to Gulf coast of Texas, and Durango, San Luis Potosí and Tamaulipas, Mexico; and from the Mississippi River west to extreme southeast corner of Arizona.

RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA: Extreme southeast corner of the state, west to the western edge of San Pedro Valley and north to Willcox (and Benson?). This includes the counties of Cochise, Graham, and Pima.

SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS

BIOLOGY: Horned lizards live in burrows, from which they emerge shortly before or at dawn, bask in the sun to warm up, and are then active until the intense heat of mid-day, force them into the shade. When frightened, horned lizards will freeze and flatten out to reduce casting a shadow. They also run short distances and then stop suddenly. When extremely agitated, they are capable of inflating their body, hissing and even squirting blood from the eyes. They are capable of “rain harvesting”, a technique whereby during rain storms they orient their body in such a way as to funnel rain to the mouth through interscalar channels. They hibernate from late Summer or Fall, into Spring. Breeding season begins soon after emerging from hibernation.

REPRODUCTION: Oviparous. Mates in late April – May or even into July. Lays a clutch of 14-37 eggs (average 22-23) in May to July, hatching in 45-55 days. No evidence of parental care.

FOOD HABITS: Arthropods (mostly ants but also grasshoppers), isopods, beetles and beetle larvae. Daily activity often mirrors highest ant activity.

HABITAT: In Arizona, Chihuahuan Desert and desert-grassland; sandy to gravelly flat ground with or without rocky cover, usually with scattered desert and grassland shrubs or on mesquite dominated flats. Often found in habitat with the Round-tailed Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma modestum*).

ELEVATION: 3,580 – 4,940 ft (1091-1506 m) in Arizona. For its entire range, the elevation ranges from sea level to around 6,000 ft (1830 m).

PLANT COMMUNITY: Chihuahuan Desert and desert-grassland; often with bunchgrass, cactus, juniper, acacia, and mesquite.

POPULATION TRENDS: Unknown in Arizona but probably upward trend in desert invaded former grasslands.

SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS: None (USDI, FWS 1996)
[C2 USDI, FWS 1994]
[C2 USDI, FWS 1991]
[C2 USDI, FWS 1989]

STATE STATUS: None

OTHER STATUS: [Bureau of Land Management Sensitive
(USDI, BLM AZ 2000, 2005)]
Listed as Endemic to Mexico, (Secretaria de Medio Ambiente 2000)

MANAGEMENT FACTORS: Is collected for the pet trade.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN: None

SUGGESTED PROJECTS: Distribution, habitat, population and life history studies.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: BLM – Safford Field Office; USFS - Coronado National Forest; State Land Department; AGFD – Willcox Playa Wildlife Area; Johnson Historical Museum; Private.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**REFERENCES:**

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Revised: 1991-03-27()
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