FOREWORD

My first introduction of any real note to mammalogy and mammalogists came, curiously enough, during a spring break outing. I was a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed wildlife student at Texas Tech on a weeklong collection trip along the wilds of the lower Pecos River. This might not have been the top spring break destination for most students, but, for this budding biologist, the chance to kayak and trap my way down the mighty Pecos was simply too irresistible to pass up.

Mammals were our designated quarry. Any species, any size would do. From white-footed deermice to yellow-faced pocket gophers to gray foxes, they were all fair game. The Museum at Texas Tech, which houses an extensive collection of vertebrate specimens for research and teaching purposes, was in need of more contemporary samples.

A young, intrepid postdoctoral student from the Texas Tech biology department had been drafted to lead the expedition. His scientific collection skills and natural history acumen were beyond reproach. His planning and orienteering skills, regrettably, were not. It would take the rest of this book to do that trip justice, but suffice it to say that, while we did well for the Museum, we spent half the trip as lost as geese in a snowstorm. The postdoc, brilliant but prematurely absentminded, had forgotten his map, so we were left to wing it concerning our trip down the river.

One of the few other souls we saw during that blissful week of paddling and collecting was a colorful old bachelor stockman and trapper near Pandale. We came upon him one afternoon late in the trip as he was checking his traps. Fortunately, he took pity on us “college boys,” as he called us, and put us up overnight in a hunting camp before ferrying us and our considerable

gear and haul to a ranch where our pickup party had been waiting for us for the better part of a day. It was by no means the first time, and certainly will not be the last, that some rancher saves the bacon of a bunch of errant biologists!

As I learned during that trip and over a career in conservation, Texas's mammals are vast in number and as varied as the state we proudly call home. As a group, they run the biological gamut from large to small, generalist to specialist, wide-ranging to endemic, diurnal to nocturnal, arboreal to fossorial, and terrestrial to aquatic. Most are native, but some are not. Many mammals are abundant in number, while others are exceedingly rare. Many are thriving, while some are quite imperiled. Some are fiercely fought over, and a few have been forgotten. And, while many are much beloved, a few others are deeply loathed. In short, Texas's mammals are a fascinating study in diversity, befitting the state's rich and proud heritage. And, irrespective of where they fall on the continuum, they are here, and ours to study and steward.

I am indebted to Drs. Schmidly and Bradley for their abundant and long-standing scholarly contributions to the fields of mammalogy and wildlife biology. As evidence of this, one does not have to look further than this volume, the seventh edition of *The Mammals of Texas*. This fine book has been the indisputable "go-to" source of information on Texas mammals for generations of students, scientists, landowners, land managers, and wildlife enthusiasts.

Originally written as a research bulletin in 1947 by Drs. W. P. Taylor and W. B. Davis and published by the Texas Game and Fish Commission, the predecessor to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the book was intended to serve as a resource for those interested in the basic biology, life history, distribution, and abundance of Texas's rich mammalian fauna. Later editions, including this one, have incorporated updated information on the geographic range, taxonomy, habitat preferences, economic contributions, and conservation status of each species.

Thanks to the considerable research and vast academic and professional expertise of the authors, the seventh edition of *The Mammals of Texas* offers the most current and comprehensive scientific body of information available on this subject. Written, compiled, and published with a broad audience in mind, the book is eminently accessible to readers of all backgrounds, from the casual wildlife enthusiast to the budding biology student to the professional land and wildlife manager. Whether one wants to learn about Mexican free-tailed bats in Hill Country maternity colonies, black-tailed prairie dog towns in the Panhandle, black bears in the Big Bend country, the rare cats of

deep South Texas, or bottlenose dolphins in Texas bays, this treatise offers something for everyone in every geographic region of the state.

On behalf of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, I would like to say thank you for caring about our wild things and wild places. They need you now more than ever.

Carter P. Smith

Executive Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

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