

Keep Texas Wild

No Place Like Home

Finding shelter isn't always easy in the great outdoors



American beaver

» HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Texas animals live anywhere and everywhere. Animals find natural shelters like caves, or use materials like leaves, sticks and mud to construct their homes. Sometimes they attach their homes to ours, or carry their homes on their backs. Many animals don't need homes every day. They have fur or feathers or scales to protect them from the weather, and only need shelter to raise babies.

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» HERMIT CRAB



CRAB © ROLF NUSSBAUMER

Hermit crabs live in the sandy bottoms along the coast. Their bodies are very delicate, so they “borrow” empty shells from other creatures to live in. When they outgrow one shell, they just find a larger one and move in.

BARN SWALLOW «

Barn swallows like to return to the same site every year, often under bridges, sometimes on the side of a house or barn, maybe even at your school. Look for a place where they are sheltered by the edge of the roof. Barn swallows take bits of mud from nearby puddles to stick together grass and straw. They line the inside with feathers.



SWALLOWS © ROLF NUSSBAUMER
ANGELFISH © JESSE CANCELMO

» AMERICAN BEAVER



BEAVER © LARRY DITTO

You may know that beavers build dams, but beavers don't actually live in dams. They build a lodge or burrow into the banks of rivers, ponds and streams for a cozy home. Most Texas beavers dig burrows with underwater entrances and a “ceiling” made of sticks and mud. Some burrows have more than one room, with a soft bed of shredded wood.

» QUEEN ANGELFISH

Over 100 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, there are colorful coral reefs where many species of fish make their home. People ride out on boats to scuba dive down to the Flower Garden Banks, so they can see these beautiful fish up close. The fish that live around the coral reefs find shelter and food there. They hide from sharks and large fish that come to eat them.



LUNA MOTH «

The luna moth comes out at night and is as big as your hand. It starts life as a silkworm, eating and eating until it's time to spin a cocoon and wrap up inside a silken “sleeping bag.” More than just sleeping happens inside, though, as the caterpillar transforms into a spectacular moth. Here, fresh from its cocoon, a luna moth dries its new wings.

MOTH © FREDERIC B. SISKIND

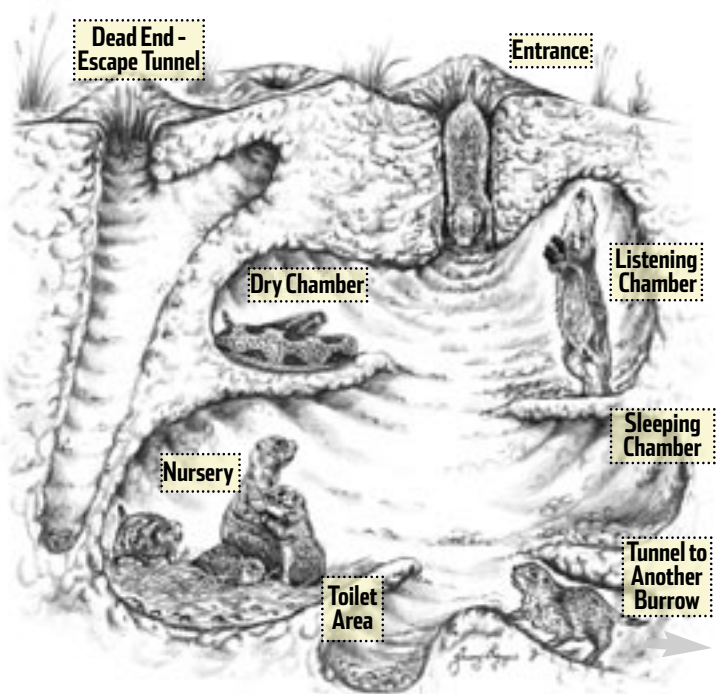




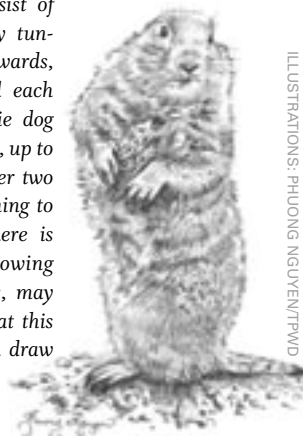
Spike's Activity Page



>> WILD ART



Black-tailed prairie dog towns consist of underground burrows connected by tunnels. The town is separated into wards, which are like neighborhoods, and each ward has several families. A prairie dog family is called a coterie, with a male, up to four females and all the babies under two years old. A sentry stays at the opening to keep watch, and “barks” when there is danger. Other animals, like burrowing owls, rabbits and even rattlesnakes, may “camp out” in a vacant hole. Look at this example of a prairie dog town, then draw your own for a single coterie.



ILLUSTRATIONS: PHUONG NGUYEN/TPWD



>> KEEPING IT WILD



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One Happy Cardinal!

One important factor for an animal's home is the availability of food. During the winter months, there's not as much food around for birds and squirrels. You can easily make an outdoor feeder that's friendly to

the environment and tasty for your backyard friends. Coat a pine cone with peanut butter, then roll it around in bird seed. Hang it from a tree branch, then watch to see who comes to eat. Cardinals really love this!

NEXT MONTH: Rare Species

TEACHER RESOURCE

Visit www.tpwmagazine.com to download a printable PDF, access lesson plans, find additional resources or order copies.

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