

Attwater's Prairie Chicken *Tympanuchus cupido attwateri*

Family: Phasianidae, Genus: *Tympanuchus*
Recognized Subspecies: Subspecies Greater Prairie Chicken
Conservation status: Endangered USFWS
Wild Pop. Trend: Decreasing
CITES: Not Listed
USFWS: Listed as Endangered

Range: Texas endemic

Conservation Concern: The Attwater's Prairie Chicken was listed as endangered by the USFWS in 1967. Wild populations were noted to be declining as early as the 1930s. Unfortunately, the combination of vanishing habitat, predation, and introduced species has taken its toll on the remaining wild population, which now numbers less than 100 birds at two protected sites.

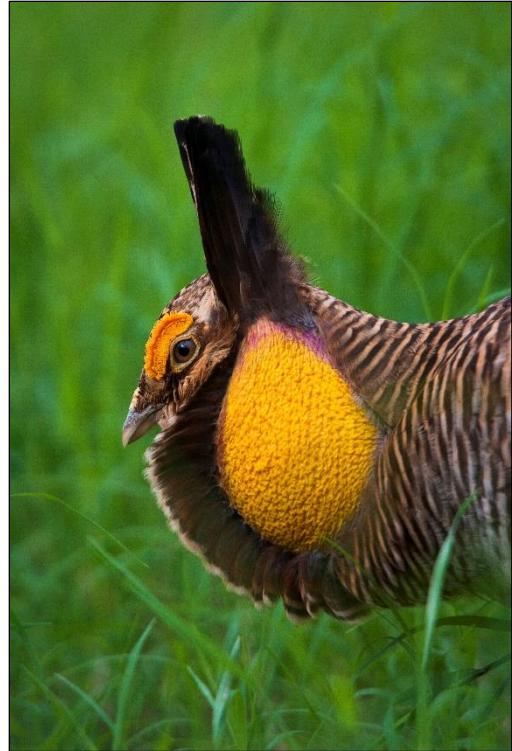


Photo credit: Houston Zoo

Species account: Attwater's Prairie Chicken is an endangered subspecies of prairie grouse that was once very common on the coastal prairies of eastern Texas, including what is today the Houston metropolitan area. This bird is perhaps best known for its "booming" display, a characteristic male behavior that attracts hens during the breeding season, which takes place from late winter through early spring.



Photo credit: Mollie Coym

All birds are owned by USFWS. The USFWS began this breeding program in 1992 due to a collapse of the wild population and the eggs collected from the wild during this time became the founders of this population. Every year hundreds of chicks are produced for both captive breeding and reintroduction back into the wild. This breeding and release program has halted the extinction of this subspecies. The captive management and release of this species has been a challenge; however, the past few years have seen success with captive bred birds nesting and fledging chicks in the wild. For more information, or to help support in-situ conservation efforts, please contact the Program Leader.

AZA Role: The captive population is being managed to provide birds for reintroduction and release into native habitats. Although this breeding program is restricted to the state of Texas, reintroduction programs are rare and supporting this effort helps gather more knowledge on what works and what doesn't work for these types of programs.

TAG Program Goals: The Attwater's closest genetic relative, the Heath Hen *Tympanuchus cupido cupido*, was one of the first conservation actions that was taken by the United States to concentrate

on improving the quality of habitat where this bird ranged. Sadly, these early efforts did not help, and this sub-species went extinct in 1932. Grouse populations across the world are in decline. As seen with these two sub-species of the Greater Prairie Chicken, the bird's quick lifespan, restricted breeding, and prey status can cause a population to rapidly go extinct once further negative pressure is placed on them.

Education Emphasis

- Reintroduction programs
- Introduced species
- Heath Hen
- Habitat conversion



Photo credit: Houston Zoo

AZA Connections: A table was not produced for this population since it is not a species that is managed for exhibit purposes, but instead the focus of the program is to breed for release.



Photo Credit: Stephanie Adams

Conservation priority species that share this species range: No conservation priority species were selected for this species as it is an endangered species that is part of a USFWS recovery program.