

# MAMMALS OF WHITE OAK LAKE STATE PARK



**White Oak Lake State Park  
Bluff City, Arkansas 71722**

[www.ArkansasStateParks.com](http://www.ArkansasStateParks.com)

## MAMMALS of White Oak Lake State Park

White Oak Lake State Park contains 725 acres of natural diversity in Nevada and Ouachita counties in southwest Arkansas. Established in 1969, the park represents a unique natural resource area situated on the sandy deposits of the West Gulf Coastal Plain.

Many wildlife residents, both permanent and migratory, are drawn to the park's special habitats. The lake and adjoining lands attract numerous species of birds, including great blue herons, great egrets, green herons and prothonotary warblers. The characteristics that make the park an ideal place for over a hundred species of birds offer the same attraction for several mammal species, including gray and fox squirrels, raccoon, beaver and nine-banded armadillo.

White Oak's mammal list contains 31 species that have been compiled and recorded since 1980. As field studies are completed, this list will likely grow, along with our understanding of these fascinating creatures. Species that should be present in the park but are not yet documented are listed at the end. To eliminate confusion, both common and scientific names are provided.

### **Big Brown Bat**

#### *Eptesicus fuscus*

Common—A large bat, the big browns are often seen feeding on insects at dusk above the park. Due to its size, it eats larger insects such as moths, horseflies and parasitic wasps. This bat, like others in the park, form the night shift insect control, wolfing down as many as 3,000 in a single evening.

## **Red Bat**

### ***Lasiurus borealis***

Abundant—This flying, orange-red mammal is probably our most common bat and appears early in the evening. The red bat is a tree dweller usually roosting 3–18 feet above the ground. Female reds may have as many as 3–4 offspring at a time and are the only bat species with 4 nipples.

## **Southeastern Myotis**

### ***Myotis austroriparius***

Uncommon—Only recently discovered as a park resident, this bat is usually found feeding above the surface of lakes and streams. This species of myotis is sometimes fed on by reptiles such as the rat and corn snakes. Prior to 1988 only one specimen had been recorded from Nevada County.

## **Evening Bat**

### ***Nycticeius humeralis***

Common—A slow, steady flight characterizes this species which begins feeding after sunset. Females form large nursery colonies while males appear to be solitary. Only one specimen was recorded here in the summer of 1988.

## **Seminole Bat**

### ***Lasiurus seminolus***

Uncommon—The Seminole is known only in Bradley, Ouachita and Nevada counties. Another tree-dweller, they generally choose a location on the southwest side of a tree. Flight is swift and direct. The blue jay is a predator of this bat. One specimen was collected from White Oak Lake State Park in the summer of 1988.

## **Southern Short-Tailed Shrew**

### ***Blarina carolinensis***

Common—Although common in particularly moist, deciduous woods, this shrew is rarely seen. With a racing metabolism and heart rate over 1000 beats/minute, they must eat about one-half their weight in food per day. One of four Arkansas shrews, the short-tailed has a voracious appetite for insects, snails, nuts and fruit.

## **Golden Mouse**

### ***Ochrotomys nutalli***

Common—This nocturnal mammal uses its cheek pouches to transport foods such as dogwood, sumac and wild cherry to its feeding area. They often build globular nests several feet above ground in clumps of grapevines, honeysuckle, or greenbrier.

## **Cotton Mouse**

### ***Peromyscus gossypinus***

Common—This mouse feeds on adult and larval insects, spiders, slugs and snails. Nesting sites are fallen logs and stumps; however, since it is an avid tree climber, it may also use tree cavities. Like most tiny mammals, these mice are active chiefly at night.

## **Deer Mouse**

### ***Peromyscus maniculatus***

Uncommon—This mouse is identified by its distinctly bi-colored tail of dark above and white below. The deer mouse often constructs an underground nest and lines the small cavity with plant down. Seldom living more than one year in the wild, they represent an important food source for predators such as hawks, owls and snakes.

## **House Mouse**

### ***Mus musculus***

Very Common—This is an introduced species common in open fields and brushy areas. Unlike natives, the house mouse is closely associated with man and his buildings. When present in substantial numbers, this mouse may exclude native mice from available habitat.

## **Fulvous Harvest Mouse**

### ***Reithrodontomys fulvescens***

Uncommon—With a tail longer than its head and body, this mouse resembles the house mouse with the exception of its grooved upper incisors. The harvest mouse feeds mainly on seeds and succulent parts of several grasses. Red-tailed hawks frequently prey upon this mouse.

## **Eastern Mole**

### ***Scalopus aquaticus***

Common—This underground mammal performs the beneficial services of destroying insects and their larvae within soil and opening it up for the penetration of air and moisture. With its stout claws, it digs two types of burrows, one shallow for foraging and one deep for protection and the raising of young.

## **Plains Pocket Gopher**

### ***Geomys bursarius***

Common—The loose, sandy, alluvial soil type present over most of the park is excellent habitat for this small mammal. The pocket gopher, like the mole, helps deepen the soil and retard runoff of surface water, as well as improve humus content of the soil. They are occasionally preyed on by coyotes, weasels and owls.

## **Beaver**

### ***Castor canadensis***

Common—North America's largest rodent, whose weight has been known to exceed 80 pounds. This mammal lives in several areas of the park, and through its construction of wetland habitat has been responsible for expanded populations of otter and mink, as well as other wildlife species.

## **Mink**

### ***Mustela vison***

Uncommon—This chiefly nocturnal, semiaquatic mammal is seldom found far from permanent pools of water such as White Oak Lake. The mink enjoys a wide range of foods, but frogs and crayfish make up the larger part of its diet. Mink are sometimes preyed upon by great horned owls and bobcats.

## **River Otter**

### ***Lutra Canadensis***

Uncommon—Well adapted for life in and around water, otters are the finest swimmers and divers of the mammals. The otter's population was very low at the turn of the century; however, due to improvements in habitat, this playful mammal has begun to increase its numbers. Crayfish and rough fish are important foods to the river otter.

## **Nutria**

### ***Myocastor coypus***

Relatively Common—This introduced aquatic rodent is a native of South America and resembles the muskrat. It feeds on aquatic and semi-aquatic vegetation such as cattails and bulrushes. Nutria have few enemies outside of the endangered American alligator and man.

## **Raccoon**

### ***Procyon lotor***

Abundant—One of the park's more common mammals, preferring areas with a large number of dens such as older beech trees provide. Females produce litters of 1–7 that are usually born in April or May. Its Latin name, *lotor*, means “a washer”; however, the raccoon's objective is not to clean its food but to enhance its sense of touch by wetting its paws.

## **Opossum**

### ***Didelphis virginiana***

Common—North America's only marsupial or pouch dweller. This species is one of the more primitive mammals. Although an opportunistic feeder (omnivorous), it rarely eats seeds. Scat deposits showing large amounts of seeds such as persimmon are usually those of raccoon and coyotes.

## **Striped Skunk**

### ***Mephitis mephitis***

Relatively Common—The scientific name for this mammal is particularly descriptive since it translates in English to, “bad smell, bad smell.” Summer diet consists of insects and fruits while its winter foods are predominately rats, mice and other small mammals.

## **Coyote**

### ***Canis latrans***

Common in some locations—Probably one of North America's most adaptable species, this mammal prefers open areas, brushland and forest edges. A close correlation exists between food supply, particularly rodents, and breeding success, since the female's condition entering the mating season determines whether she will breed.

## **Red Fox**

### ***Vulpes vulpes***

Rare—Chiefly nocturnal, this fox has great speed and stamina. Its diet consists primarily of rats and mice. The red fox is said to mate for life.

## **Gray Fox**

### ***Urocyon cinereoargenteus***

Uncommon—This mammal has long, sharp, curved claws, making it an able tree climber. Cottontail rabbits make up as much as half of its diet; however, the gray fox tends to consume more plant foods than either the red fox or coyote.

## **Bobcat**

### ***Felis rufus***

Common—This secretive cat gets its name from its short, bobbed tail. Almost exclusively carnivorous, the bobcat preys on rabbits. The habitat and protection provided inside the park help ensure a healthy population.

## **Eastern Gray Squirrel**

### ***Sciurus carolinensis***

Common—This brushy-tailed mammal is the most visible species in the park and when not seen may be detected by the short barks it gives when excited. The gray squirrel constructs two types of nests, a temporary leaf nest in the crotch of trees and a more permanent nest of bark and plant material found in hollow trees.

## **Eastern Fox Squirrel**

### ***Sciurus niger***

Common—Although not seen as frequently as the gray squirrel, this large, orange colored species is relatively abundant with a black phase sometimes observed. Habitat is similar



to the gray squirrel's. The fox squirrel has a keen sense of smell which in winter allows it to locate nuts buried earlier in the year.

## **Southern Flying Squirrel**

### ***Glaucomys volans***

Common—This nocturnal species has a layer of loose skin from forefoot to hindfoot allowing it to glide from tree to tree. These mammals also depend on hollow trees for nest and food storage. In winter as many as a dozen or more squirrels can occupy one tree cavity.

## **Eastern Cottontail**

### ***Sylvilagus floridanus***

Common—This is probably the most abundant game animal in the state. Although found in a diverse variety of habitats, it is most frequently located in brushy thickets. Populations fluctuate widely from year to year, depending on environmental factors such as habitat, weather and disease.

## **Swamp Rabbit**

### ***Sylvilagus aquaticus***

Common—Favoring wetlands habitat, this species may be readily detected by piles of fecal pellets on logs, stumps and other elevations. The swamp rabbit frequents vegetation, sedges and juvenile tree species.

## **White-Tailed Deer**

### ***Odocoileus virginianus***

Common—The largest park mammal, the white-tailed deer is a creature of the forest edge where it readily browses on a variety of plants and fruits. Nearly extinct in the early 1900s, the white-tail has been brought back due to elimination of market hunting and habitat improvement.

## **Nine-Banded Armadillo**

### ***Dasyus novemcinctus***

Common—This chiefly nocturnal mammal is the only North American species with a protective coat of armor; however, this is not the only unique aspect of this species. Each litter of four is genetically identical and all of the same sex. Abandoned armadillo burrows provide shelter for rabbits, opossums and skunks.

## **MAMMALS FOUND LOCALLY but not yet documented in White Oak Lake State Park Woodland Vole**

### ***Microtus pinetorum***

Habitat is available for this species but none have been collected from small mammal surveys. England/McDaniel report this vole from both Nevada and Ouachita county.

## **Least Shrew**

### ***Cryptotis parva***

Although its presence has not been documented, further study is needed to determine whether this species might use park habitat.

## **Hispid Cotton Rat**

### ***Sigmodon hispidus***

Probably occurs in some portions of the park. England reports four specimens from Ouachita County in 1987.

## **Eastern Wood Rat**

### ***Neotoma floridana***

This species is perhaps better known for its common name of pack rat. Unlike some relatives this rat has sanitary habits denoting toilet areas around the nest where fecal matter is deposited. Recorded in 1987 by England in Ouachita County.

## **Rafinesque's Big-Eared Bat**

### ***Plecotus rafinequii***

This bat very likely uses the park. Two specimens have been recorded on land adjoining the park acreage in Ouachita County.

## **Eastern Pipistrelle**

### ***Pipistrellus subflavus***

Although not yet recorded from the park, one specimen was collected by England six miles north in 1987 near Reader, Arkansas.

## **MAMMALS POSSIBLY OCCURRING IN THIS AREA**

Most of those species mentioned below are known to occur in the area surrounding Ouachita and Nevada County.

## **Silver-Haired Bat**

### ***Lasiorycteris noctivagans***

England/McDaniel have documented this species' presence in adjacent counties.

## **Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat**

### ***Tadarida brasiliensis***

More information and studies are needed to determine the occurrence of this mammal. England/McDaniel report this species from surrounding counties.

## **Muskrat**

### ***Ondatra zibethicus***

In Sealander's *Arkansas Mammals*, this species is listed with statewide distribution, but no records are available to document occurrence within Nevada or Ouachita County.

## **Long-Tailed Weasel**

### ***Mustela frenata***

Although unlikely, further study is needed to

determine whether this rare mammal may occur here. High populations of the plains pocket gopher make it a possibility.

## **EXTINCT MAMMALS**

It is unfortunate that we have already lost three of our larger mammal species; the red wolf, elk and woodland bison all roamed this area in historic times.

### **Mountain Lion**

#### ***Felis concolor***

An Arkansas endangered species that was present here; however, only a few of these large cats are now found within the entire state. This unique mammal requires large expanses of wilderness and a relatively high population of white-tailed deer for its survival.

### **Black Bear**

#### ***Ursus americanus***

Previously known here, it is possible that a few may occur in extremely small numbers even now. The black bear has fortunately been restored to more isolated portions of its range within the state.

## **For More Information Contact**

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