

## NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

Information on the occurrence and distribution of vertebrate animals are lacking from the South Texas Sand Sheet compared to other regions of Texas. **Natural history collections concentrated in the South Texas Sand Sheet will dramatically increase our knowledge and understanding of biodiversity in this region, fill in holes for many species' distributions, and serve as a priceless educational resource.**

In 2013, the East Foundation initiated a natural history collection across its 4 largest landholdings, including the San Antonio Viejo, El Sauz, Santa Rosa, and Buena Vista ranches, which mostly occur in the South Texas Sand Sheet. At present, our research and education collection focuses on mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. During the last quarter alone (April–June 2015), we collected 86 individuals from 10 mammal species, 53 individuals from 34 bird species, 51 individuals from 22 reptile species, and 10 individuals from 6 amphibian species.



The capture, handling, and collection of such a diverse assemblage of wildlife allows for numerous exploratory research endeavors, all from a previously understudied region. For example, **the East Foundation is working with its partners to:**

- Survey birds for avian malaria
- Survey birds for the presence of louse

- Determine ectoparasites on mammals
- Screen for tick-borne pathogens in mammals
- Survey mammals and the vector for the causative agent of Chagas disease



**Several significant discoveries occurred within our reptile and amphibian collections during the last quarter, including:**

- The shell of a Green Sea Turtle was discovered on the shore at El Sauz; this is the fourth shell of an endangered species of turtle that has been documented since the project began
- While conducting frog-call surveys, Mexican Burrowing Toads were discovered on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch
- Another breeding pond for Black-spotted Newts was discovered on the El Sauz Ranch

**Partners: Biodiversity Research and Teaching Collections at Texas A&M University**