



Common Animal Species List



NPS Photo © Sally King

White Sands National Monument is home to over 500 different animal species. Despite the harsh environment of the dunefield, these incredible creatures have learned to adapt and survive in this southern New Mexico desert. While many of these animals are nocturnal, there are still signs of their activity well into the daylight hours. Keep your eyes open and watch for evidence of the many animal species, both large and small, that call White Sands their home.

Amphibians

6 Species

Commonly Seen:

Great Plains Toad
Spadefoot Toads (three species)

Reptiles

26 Species

Commonly Seen:

Lizards

Bleached Earless Lizard
Collared Lizard
Desert Spiny Lizard
Horned Lizard (two species)
Little Striped Whiptail Lizard
Long-nosed Leopard Lizard
New Mexico Whiptail Lizard
Southern Prairie Lizard

Snakes

Plains Blackhead Snake
Prairie Rattlesnake
Sonora Gopher Snake
Western Coachwhip Snake
Western Diamondback Snake

Mammals

44 Species

Commonly Seen:

Apache Pocket Mouse
Badger
Blacktail Jackrabbit
Bobcat
Coyote
Deer Mouse
Desert Cottontail
Desert Pocket Gopher

Grey Fox
Kit Fox
Kangaroo Rat
Oryx (African)
Pallid Bat
Porcupine
White-footed Mouse
Woodrat (three species)

Fish

1 Species

White Sands Pupfish

Invertebrates

500+ Species
100+ Families
12 Orders

Commonly Seen:

Black Widow
Camel Cricket
Carpenter Bee
Darkling Beetle

Nevada Buck Moth Caterpillar
Tarantula
Tarantula Hawk Wasp
White-Lined Sphinx Moth



Mexican Spadefoot Toad
Spea multiplicata

The Mexican spadefoot toad is the official state amphibian of New Mexico and gets its name from the distinctive spade-like projections on the hind legs. These formations allow the species to dig into sandy soils where they spend most of their life underground. The Spadefoot Toad will emerge during monsoon season in the late summer to

breed and feed on insects. These amphibians lay eggs in the pools of water that form during this rainy season. The eggs hatch quickly and the resulting tadpoles have evolved to mature before the puddles of water dry up. You are most likely to find this animal in any low-lying area of the park where puddles may develop.



Texas Horned Lizard
Phrynosoma cornutum

The Texas horned lizard receives its name from the portions of bone that extend from the animal's skull and resemble horns. This gives the lizard a fearsome appearance, but it is not its primary defense mechanism. While its coloration provides camouflage, this animal can fend off predators by squirting a stream of blood out of its eyes. This is particularly effective in avoiding

canine predators, who cannot stand the taste of the blood. These lizards feed mainly on ants, but will also eat other insects. Requiring vitamin D for survival, the Texas Horned Lizard spends most of its day sunbathing on rocks. It sleeps underground at night. You are most likely to find this lizard in the highly vegetated areas of the park during the warmer, sunnier months.



Pallid Bat
Antrozous pallidus

The pallid bat is a common North American bat species and can often be found roosting on the buildings of White Sands National Monument. These insectivores utilize echolocation to sense their surrounding environment and to more easily feed on flying insects. These bats hibernate during the winter months, but are often seen

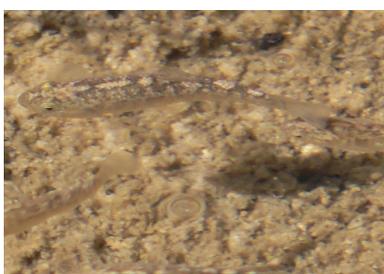
during the summer surrounding the visitor center. Female pallid bats give birth in early June and bats reach full size only eight weeks later. Skilled climbers, they can be found scaling the walls near their roosts. Look for these fuzzy critters in the patio during the summer months or in the nearby bat houses.



American Badger
Taxidea taxus

The American badger is a feisty and territorial carnivore. With a flattened body and a wedge-shaped head, this animal is built for life underground and will dig burrows in shallow, sandy soil with its long claws. Badgers primarily eat rodents, but will also consume lizards and scavenge the prey of coyotes that

hunt nearby. This clever creature has also been known to plug exit holes of burrowing animals before tunneling underground to capture their prey. You are most likely to see a badger during the warmer months around the heavily vegetated areas of the park.



White Sands Pupfish
Cyprinodon tularosa

The White Sands pupfish is a rare species of fish that can only be found in the Tularosa Basin here in southern New Mexico. There is little water in the area, but these little fish can be found in small streams and ponds throughout the region. These fish live to be about three years of age and feed on small insects and

algae. This is the only fish native to the Tularosa Basin, likely because the only surface water available is typically shallow, salty, and warm - not ideal conditions for most fish. The White Sands pupfish is a state-listed endangered species and only lives in the Basin's Lost River.



Tarantula Hawk Wasp
Pepsis spp.

The tarantula hawk is among the largest species of wasps (averaging 2 inches long) and is the state insect of New Mexico. This insect receives its name from the way the female lays her eggs - she paralyzes a tarantula with a menacing sting and lays an egg on the spider's abdomen. Once the larva hatches, they feed on the tarantula until reaching adulthood

several weeks later. This wasp's stinger can be up to 1/3 inch long. The sting is among the most painful in the insect world. The Tarantula Hawk Wasp rarely stings unless provoked, however. This insect feeds on nectar from flowers found within the park and is most likely to be seen in the summer months.