



Delta Discovery

Connecting Classrooms to Nature at the
Nueces Delta Preserve

Spotlight on a Species

Fact sheets discussing species found on the Nueces Delta Preserve

Greater Roadrunner



Fast Facts:

Scientific name:

Geococcyx californianus

Common names: *Roadrunner*,
Greater Roadrunner

Habitat: *arid and semi arid areas*,
variety of plant habitats

Fun fact: *eats venomous prey*
items without problems

The Greater Roadrunner is a ground dwelling bird that typically inhabits arid habitats with scattered brush. In Texas it can be found throughout the state, though it is less common in the Piney Woods and the northern portions of the state. The roadrunner rarely flies, though it can cover short distances at a low height. Roadrunners can reach speeds up to 18.6 miles per hour. They use this speed to evade predators, but also to catch fast moving prey. Roadrunners are omnivores, mostly consuming lizards, spiders, scorpions, snakes and occasionally birds. If water is not available, the roadrunner will consume cacti and other plants to obtain water.

Since they live in primarily dry desert habitats, roadrunners have adapted to the challenges of living in this environment. The skin under their feathers is black, allowing them to absorb heat from the sun in the morning after cold nights (nights in the desert are cold; also roadrunners do not typically migrate for winter). They have salt glands, much like albatrosses, which allow them to excrete salt from their blood without wasting water.

Roadrunners, like penguins, are loyal mates. They sometimes pair for life and both genders will defend the shared territory. Each spring the female lays 3-6 eggs which hatch in succession. If there are not enough resources the first chick will cannibalize the younger siblings or eggs.

Sources for Further Reading:

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Greater_Roadrunner/lifehistory/ac

http://www.desertmuseum.org/books/nhsd_roadrunner_new.php

<http://www.passporttotexas.com/birds/jul00.html>

<http://creagrus.home.montereybay.com/cuckoos.html>