

The Texas Horned Lizard in Sonora

By Thomas Van Devender

The Texas Horned Lizard in Sonora (*Phrynosoma cornutum*) is found from extreme southwestern Missouri and central Kansas to southeastern Colorado, and south and west throughout most of Oklahoma and Texas, eastern and southern New Mexico, and the Mexican Plateau east of Sierra Madre Occidental. The western limits of its range are in southeastern Arizona to northeastern Sonora.

Recently Chris Roll photographed several adults in desert grassland in his plant study area in the Pat Hills just south of Willcox, Arizona.



In Sonora, *P. cornutum* is well known in the Chihuahuan desert scrub and desert grassland near Naco, Agua Prieta, and Fronteras. In April 2008, I found one on Mesa las Víboras 30 km east of Agua Prieta. This is a very unusual dwarf mesquite plain habitat on a clay surface. In a very large area, the velvet mesquites (*Prosopis velutina*) are less than a meter tall.



Mario Cirett is the Director of Ajos-Bavispe Reserva Forestal Nacional y Refugio de Fauna Silvestre, a Mexican national forest in northeastern Sonora with five major Sky Island mountain ranges. He sent images of a *P. cornutum* taken by Jesús Duarte near San Pedro Palominas along the Río San Pedro west of Naco and northeast of Cananea. The San Pedro River is unusual because its headwaters are in Sonora and it flows north into Arizona. The river is protected in Arizona as the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. The *camaleón* that Jesús found is a large, very fat male with an unusual reddish brown ground color. This is the westernmost record for the species in Sonora and the first from the San Pedro River drainage basin.



With eight species, Sonora has greatest diversity of horned lizards of any state in Mexico or the United States. They are *Phrynosoma cornutum*, *P. ditmarsii*, *P. goodei*, *P. hernandesi*, *P. mcallii*, *P. modestum*, *P. orbiculare*, and *P. solare*. Five species of *Phrynosoma* are listed in the 2010 NOM, the Mexican endangered species law. *Phrynosoma mcallii* and *P. orbiculare* in Sonora have *Amenazada* (Threatened) status. Locality records and images of Sonoran horned lizards are available in the Madrean Archipelago Biodiversity Assessment database (Madrean.org).