

# Ecological Restoration Brief

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## Javelina Restoration: Lessons from Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area

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The collard peccary, or javelina (*Tayassu tajacu*) is currently found in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona; although its historical range was much more expansive, extending into South America. Like many animals, pressures from human settlement have decreased the range of the javelina. On the Edwards Plateau, javelina were extirpated in some areas due to habitat loss and overharvest.

Negative perceptions regarding javelina exist due to their appearance similarities to the nuisance species, feral hogs. However, javelina are only distantly related to true swine and there are many differences between these two animals. Javelina are small, averaging 35-45 pounds and 18 inches tall with no visible tail.



**Collard Peccary/Javelina (*Tayassu tajacu*)**  
**Photo Credit: Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area**

Javelina are highly territorial and possess a dorsal scent gland, used to mark territory that is absent in feral hogs. Other unique characteristics of javelina include: small and less visible ears, fused dewclaw on hind feet, three toes on hind feet (feral hogs have four), fused radius and ulna bones, fewer teeth than feral hogs, different tooth growth, an enlarged and complex stomach and absence of a gall bladder.

Physiological and behavioral adaptations allow javelina to readily adapt to climate changes such as extreme heat, periodic cold and low rainfall. Thriving in arid lands, their main food source is prickly pear cactus, but can include other succulents, mesquite beans, forbs and insects.



**Squadron of Javelina**  
**Photo Credit: Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area**

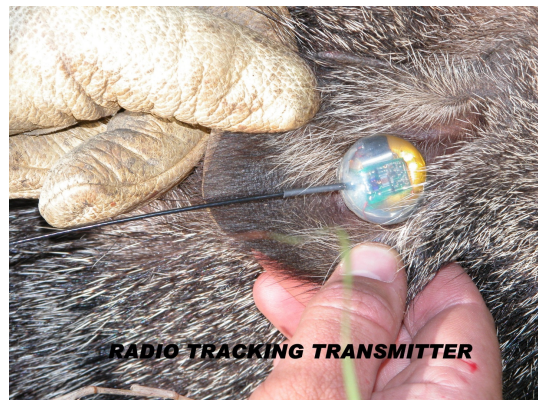
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) documented a significant decline in the javelina population in the 1990s that seemed to follow drought cycles, habitat management treatments and emphasis placed on white-tailed deer management. Also noted by TPWD was the correlation of reduced javelina sightings with increased observations of feral hogs. As a result,

a reintroduction of javelina was carried out at Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area (MMWMA) in an effort to restore javelina populations in

Texas. Located in the Llano uplift, MMWMA is part of the native home range of the javelina. The area is under intensive management with natural resource conservation as the focus.

Javelina were trapped in Choke Canyon State Park (CCSP) and on Chaparral Wildlife Management Area (CWMA) in South Texas. Upon capture, each animal was marked with a radio transmitter ear-tag. Since javelina live in family groups, a unique challenge of this reintroduction was to artificially form a family group. The success of the reintroduction would depend on the cohesion of the newly formed family group. To facilitate this "bonding" or cohesion, the newly trapped javelina were kept in a holding pen for 2-4 weeks prior to release.

After release, the radio-tagged javelina were monitored 2-5 times per week for six months via homing and triangulation. The family group stayed together and few losses occurred. Since this reintroduction in 2004, the javelina herd has become established enough for TPWD to offer youth hunts. This successful reintroduction can serve as a model to effectively restore javelina in other parts of the state where appropriate.



**Ear Tag Radio Transmitter**  
**Photo Credit: Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area**

#### Sources:

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