The Big Bend Project area is home to a number of threatened and endangered species that are protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. What is the Endangered Species Act and why is it needed? When Congress authorized the Endangered Species Act they declared that species of "fish, wildlife, and plants are of aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people." The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby endangered species and their ecosystems may be conserved. The intent of the Endangered Species Act is not to just list species as endangered or threatened, but rather, to recover the population of these species to a point where they can be removed from the list. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the law for all inland species and certain marine species.

What are endangered species?
The Endangered Species Act states that the Secretary of Interior shall determine species as endangered or threatened based on manmade factors affecting their continued existence.

Endangered: Species listed as endangered are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

Threatened: Species listed as threatened are species that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

Why save endangered species?
Many forms of plants and animals are used directly by humans. Medicines derived from plants have a commercial value. Scientists continue to find new plants for medicinal purposes. For example, a tree called the Pacific Yew, found in the northwestern United States, is known to have properties that will aid in some cancer treatments.

Since many species of plants and wildlife are more susceptible to changes in the environment, they will often show detrimental effects long before humans. For example, byproducts in the pesticide DDT led to a dramatic decline in the numbers of bald eagles by causing a thinning in their eggshells. DDT increases in concentration (bioaccumulates) as it goes up the food chain. Since bald eagles are at the top of the food chain, they were greatly affected by this pesticide.

All organisms store valuable genetic material that once lost, is gone forever. So, we ask you to recognize them, respect them, and protect their habitat. Please remember that it is unlawful to kill, harm, or harass endangered species.

The following are threatened and endangered species that may be seen in the Big Bend Project area:

(Pallid Sturgeon)

Pallid Sturgeon (Endangered)
The Pallid Sturgeon is a primitive bottom-dwelling fish whose body is covered with bony plates with sharp scutes stretching along its back. This unique fish can be identified by four barbels located at the front of the mouth. Of the four barbels, the outside ones are much longer than the inside barbels. If an angler catches any type of sturgeon, they must immediately release the fish back to the water.