



Office of Ellis County Judge Todd Little
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**“Commissioner Perry and Ray Telfair Recognized in Scientific Magazine
for Proving Existence of Rattlesnake Species in Ellis County”**

Ellis County, TX – Joint research over rattlesnake species conducted by County Commissioner Paul Perry and local conservationist Ray C. Telfair II, Ph.D., has been published by the Texas Herpetological Society. Although previous research did not include Ellis County as part of the range of *Crotalus atrox*, the western diamondback rattlesnake, Perry and Telfair teamed up to verify the presence of the species and describe its habitat and range.

Previous academic publications have confirmed the existence of the western diamondback in Dallas, Tarrant, Johnson, and Hill Counties, but research had always indicated that the diamondback’s range stopped short of Ellis County. Many Ellis County residents reported encounters with the western diamondback, but the local presence of this breed had never been proven beyond anecdote – that is, until Perry and Telfair collected data revisiting the habitat and geographic range of the western diamondback.

“Our family property in Midlothian was actually called Rattlesnake Hill; before we purchased the place, a big den was dynamited there in the ‘50’s,” says Perry, who was raised in Midlothian and now lives in the Milford area. Perry also says he remembers dodging rattlesnakes while hauling square bales when he was a high-schooler in Midlothian.

For many years, Perry collected rattlesnake specimens around Ellis County, while he and Telfair attempted to have their documentation of *Crotalus atrox* published. The two men finally saw an opportunity to capitalize on local interest when an Ellis County newspaper published an article about animal control officer James Fabby removing a rattlesnake from a resident’s property. While Perry gathered specimens, Telfair – a retired conservationist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – guided the academic structure of a formal research paper.

A portion of the research paper written by Perry and Telfair now appears in the Winter 2022 edition of the Texas Herpetological Society newsletter.

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