

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

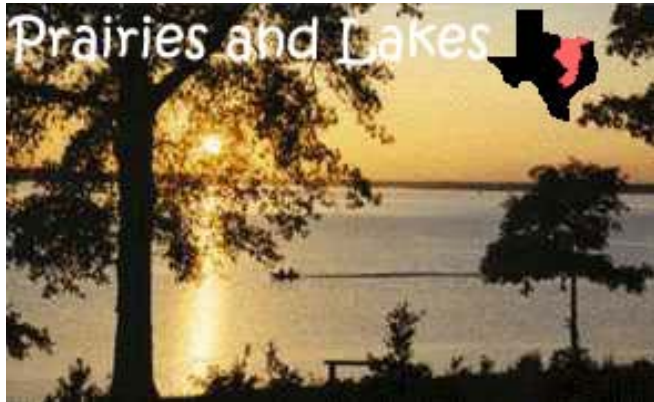


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REGIONAL DESCRIPTION

The Prairies and Lakes region is in north central and central Texas. The region forms a transition between the plains of the West Texas Panhandle and the Pineywoods of East Texas. Extending from the north to the south, the region has three distinct ecoregions within the area. The Cross Timbers lies on the west side, Blackland Prairie in the center and Post Oak Savannah on the east side.



The Cross Timbers region acquired its name due to the patches of treed areas crossing the prairie grassland. Many different tree species can be found here, including post oak, blackjack oak, shin oak, Texas oak, live oak, mesquite, Ashe juniper, eastern red cedar, cedar elm, hickory, elbowbush, rough-leaved dogwood, flame-leaf sumac and many more.

The terrain in this area is very hilly, with steep sandstone and limestone slopes and long cliffs.

The Blackland Prairies region is named for the deep, fertile black soils that are found in the area. Blackland Prairie soils once supported a tallgrass prairie dominated by tall-growing grasses such as big bluestem, little bluestem, indiagrass, and switchgrass. Because of the fertile soils, much of the original prairie has been plowed to produce food crops for both people and livestock. Only an estimated 5,000 acres remain in their historic condition in terms of plant species.



The Post Oak Savannah region was originally dominated by native bunch grasses, broad-leaved herbs and wildflowers with scattered clumps of trees, primarily post oaks. Forested areas were generally restricted to bottomlands along major rivers and creeks, or in areas protected from fire. The region is located north of the Brazos River.



Today, most of the area has been converted into vast acreages of improved pastures consisting of Bermudagrass and/or Bahia grass.

The Brazos River is the largest river between the Rio Grande and the Red River has a total length of about 840 miles. Of the seven major regions of Texas, the Prairies and Lakes region has the most reservoirs, ranging in size from 65 surface acres (Bonham State Park Lake) to 74,686 surface acres (Lake Texoma). These water bodies provide water for metropolitan areas and offer excellent opportunities for boating and fishing.

The face of the landscape in North-Central Texas has changed dramatically over the past 150 years. Once-large tracts of land (2 – 10 thousand acres) now are rapidly being subdivided and sold as small "ranchettes." Historically, large farms and ranches afforded wildlife vast, unbroken expanses of habitat. Today, houses, roads, and towns dot the landscape, effectively isolating smaller and smaller patches of habitat. This process, called habitat fragmentation, ultimately diminishes available habitat and the number and variety of animals that can live in it. Conservation biologists are trying to restore some of the prairies that wildlife depend upon for survival.

Giant dinosaurs once roamed this region long, long ago. Fossils of 17 different dinosaurs have been found, including Tyrannosaurus Rex. Dinosaur Valley State Park near Glen Rose has the largest collection of dinosaur footprints.

Crop production and cattle ranching are the primary agricultural industries.

Learn more about the [Prairies and Lakes](#) region, its [history](#), [wildlife](#), and [state parks](#).

Topography and Characteristics

Major Rivers: Trinity, Red, Brazos

Major Aquifer: Trinity

Size: 45,000 sq. mi.

The landscape of the region is gently rolling to hilly. Elevations range from 300 to 800 feet above sea level. Soils throughout the region vary ranging from light to dark gray acidic soils with textures ranging from sandy loams to clays.

Nearly all surface rocks of the North Central Texas were deposited during the Cretaceous Period (145 – 65 million years ago). Some exposed surface formations in the western part of the West Cross Timbers date from the 300-million-year-old Pennsylvanian Period. Learn more about the [rivers](#) and numerous [lakes](#) in this region.

Major Cities / Rainfall / Elevation

Avg. Net Evaporation rate: 41 inches

CITY	AVERAGE ANNUAL PRECIPITATION	ELEVATION
Albany	28.45 in.	1,400 ft.
Bonham	44.56 in.	600 ft.
Burnet	32.43 in.	1,275 ft.
Comanche	29.41 in.	1,358 ft.
Dallas	37.05 in.	440 ft.
Gatesville	33.43 in.	760 ft.
Glen Rose	34.82 in.	655 ft.
Gonzales	36.02 in.	380 ft.
Marlin	37.99 in.	388 ft.
Mexia	41.40 in.	535 ft.
Mineola	45.88 in.	385 ft.
Mineral Wells	31.79 in.	930 ft.
Wills Point	43.68 in.	522 ft.

Source: National Climate Data Center, U.S. Dept of Commerce, www.ncdc.noaa.gov

Common Vegetation

Mexican plum	American elderberry	Bur oak
Sugarberry	Bald cypress	Eastern cottonwood
Green ash	Buttonbush	Post oak
Red oak	Pecan	Persimmon
Flameleaf sumac	Black hickory	Wax myrtle
Green hawthorne	Black walnut	Buckeye
Black cherry	Sycamore	

Learn more on our Wildscapes page: [Plant Guidance for Prairies and Lakes Region](#) and [Blackland Prairies](#)

Rare Plants & Habitats

Large-fruited sand verbena
Navasota ladies-tresses
Tall grass prairie

Learn more about [Endangered and Threatened Plants](#).

Common Wildlife

Plains pocket gopher	Bobwhite quail	Texas horned lizard
Beaver	Red-shouldered hawk	Eastern hognose snake
Raccoon	Scissortail flycatcher	Tarantula
Porcupine	White-tailed deer	Northern mockingbird
Hispid cotton rat	Mexican free-tailed bat	Largemouth Bass
Ornate box turtle	Ringtail	
Green-winged teal	Nine-banded armadillo	

Learn more about these animals on our [Wildlife Fact Sheets](#).

Rare Animals

Black-capped vireo
Golden-cheeked warbler
Texas kangaroo rat

Learn more about [Endangered and Threatened Species](#).

ISSUES AND TOPICS OF CONCERNS

To become environmentally literate, we first have to consider these core concepts:

1. Fish and wildlife resources are a public trust.

Did you know that ownership of land does not convey ownership of wildlife? For example, a deer inhabiting Joe's ranch does not belong to Joe—the deer belongs to all of us.

2. Conservation and management of terrestrial and water resources are essential to sustaining fish and wildlife, the outdoor landscape, and the quality of our lives.

Would you agree that we all enjoy looking at a beautiful and healthy scenic landscape?

3. Understanding and active participation in the stewardship and support of our natural resources is key.

Would you agree that when one participates in a service project such as a tree planting, that they take pride and ownership in that habitat now and in the future?

These are the first three of five core concepts endorsed by Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). Learn more about the [AFWA Core Concepts](#).

With the above concepts in mind, TPWD held a series of focus meetings with leading biologists across the state. They were asked: *“What issues in your area are most important for people to know or understand?”*

Terrestrial Issues:

- Invasive and Exotic Species
- Understanding the Landscape (value of Blackland Prairies & the role of outlying farms and ranches)
- Benefits of conservation / What is Conservation

Aquatic Issues:

- Water Conservation
- Understanding Stream Dynamics
- Trinity River

Learn more about the [habitats of Prairies and Lakes](#). Explore the [Wildlife Management Areas \(WMA\) of Prairies and Lakes region](#) Learn more about the [state of water in the Prairies and Lakes](#) region.

Project WILD Activities Relative to Regional Issues

- From Bison to Bread (understanding the landscape)
- The American Prairie (understanding the value of prairies)
- To Dam or Not to Dam (understanding stream dynamics)
- Blue Ribbon Niche (understanding stream dynamics)
- How Wet is our Planet? (water conservation)

Project WILD Activities with Texas Adaptations

- Checks and Balances
- Happy Prairie (adapted from Dragonfly Pond)
- Here Today, Gone Tomorrow
- Watershed (Aquatic)
- World Travelers

TPWD Resources

People:

- Find your local [Game Warden](#)
- Find your local Wildlife [Biologist](#)

Student publications and activities:

- [Coloring pages](#) for the Prairies and Lakes
- [Teacher activity pages](#) for the Prairies and Lakes

Maps:

- Cross Timbers ecoregion [Map](#)
- Post Oak Savannah ecoregion [Map](#)
- Blackland Prairie ecoregion [Map](#)
- Major Aquifers [map](#)
- Minor Aquifers [map](#)
- Additional [maps](#) (rainfall, vegetation, river basins, etc)

Media, Videos and Web casts:

- [Videos](#) about the state parks of the Prairies and Lakes region
- [Webcasts](#) for the Prairies and Lakes region
- Search the [TPW Magazine](#) for articles about the Prairies and Lakes

Habitat and Wildlife Publications:

Habitat:

- [Land Fragmentation in Texas: Meeting the Challenge](#)
- [An Analysis of Texas Waterways: A Report on the Physical Characteristics of Rivers, Streams, and Bayous in Texas](#)
 - [Brazos River](#)
 - [Red River](#)
 - [Trinity River](#)
- [Lake Survey Reports](#)
- [Farmland Management](#)
- [Livestock Management](#)
- [Habitat Management for Nongame Wildlife - Cross Timbers](#)
- [Guidelines for Bobwhite Habitat Management in the Cross Timbers and Prairies](#)
- [Guidelines for Native Grassland Restoration Projects](#)
- [Integrating Deer and Cattle Management in the Post Oak Savannah](#)
- [Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture](#)
- [Shared Wildlife Resources: An Ecological Approach to Cooperative Wildlife and Habitat Management in the Cross Timbers](#)
- [Sunflowers for wildlife in the Cross Timbers](#)
- [The Values of Wise Land Use in an Agricultural Landscape](#)
- [Wildlife and Habitat Management on Small Acreages in the Cross-Timbers and Prairies Region of Texas](#)
- [Dangers of Invasive Species brochure](#)
- [North Texas Wildlife Management News](#)
- [Additional water-related links](#)

Wildlife:

- [Identification of Basses of Texas](#)
- [On the Waterfowl of Texas](#)
- [Birds of the Oaks & Prairies of Texas](#)
- [Black-capped Vireo](#)
- [Black-capped Vireo life history](#)
- [Golden-cheeked Warbler Life History](#)
- [White-tailed Deer Food Habits and Preferences in the Cross Timbers and Prairies Region of Texas](#)



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