

## Ray Roberts Lake State Park

is located in the Cross Timbers, a subregion of the Post Oak Savannah ecoregion. This 2.2-mile trail takes you through some of the finest examples of habitat in the Post Oak Savannah ecoregion. The land under the lake might have looked like this before the lake was constructed in the 1980s, covering the area with water. As you hike along the trail you will see dense woodlands and playful, open prairies. Follow along with this trail guide to learn more about the communities of the Cross Timbers and the Post Oak Savannah and take a walk through time.



Blue Water Leaf

### Ray Roberts Lake State Park Isle du Bois Unit

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For more information, visit  
[www.tpwd.texas.gov/rayrobertslake](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/rayrobertslake)

 RayRobertsLakeStatePark

 @RayRobertsLake

Cover photo and photo above courtesy of "Nature's Stage," a contributor to the Ray Roberts Lake photo contest on Flickr.

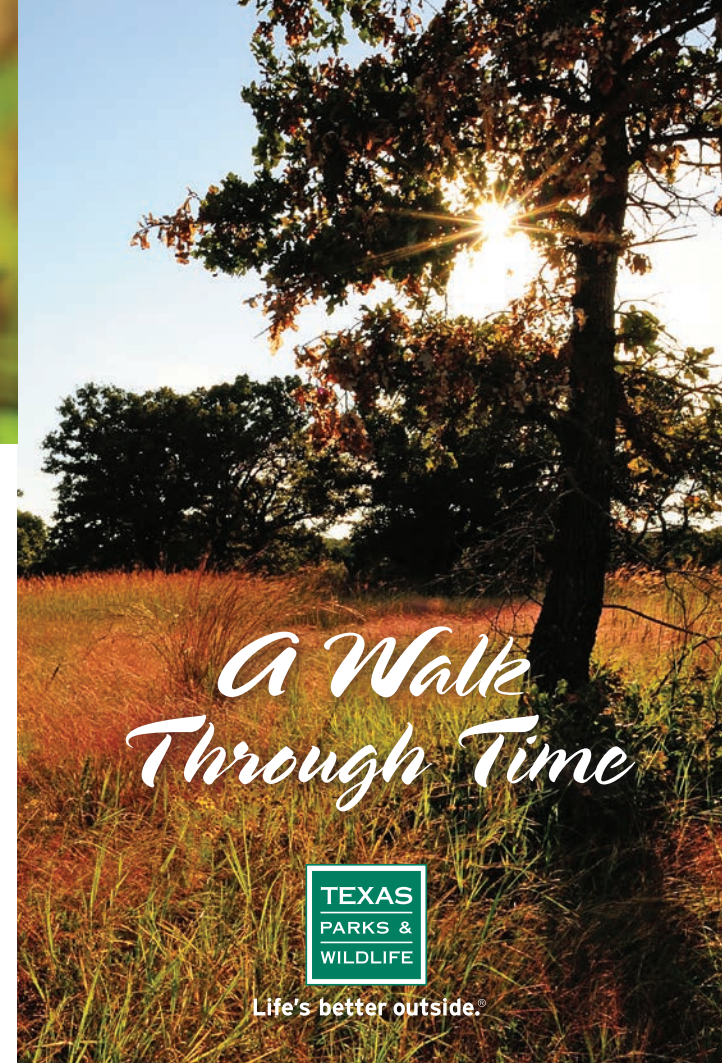


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## A Walk Through Time



Life's better outside.®

RAY ROBERTS LAKE STATE PARK

Explore the woodlands and prairies as they were before Ray Roberts Lake was developed, and experience the many stories the Randy Bell Scenic Trail has to share.

## 1 Precious Prairie

Pocket prairies like the one you see here were once common features of the Post Oak Savannah. Travelers would often use prairie openings like this one to stop and rest. In 1716, Capitan don Domingo Ram6n wrote, “We advanced seven leagues with great difficulty, arriving in the afternoon in an open spot that God had placed there for us to rest after such a painful journey.”

Besides providing a good stopping place, these prairies support insects, birds and mammals. The native grasses that grow here are tough and hardy. Some have roots extending 16 feet deep into the soil, helping them survive even the worst drought.

## 2 Monte Grande



As you look around, you will notice that this part of the trail crosses dense woodlands. The dominant trees are primarily oaks and elms, common for the Post Oak Savannah. The earliest written descriptions of this region came from Spanish explorers.

They called it *Monte Grande*, which means “large forest.” “We crossed the Monte Grande. The name fits it, since it is necessary to bring a guide in order to go through it, because it is so wooded and entangled,” wrote Fray Francisco C6liz in 1718.

## 3 Days Gone Bye

Wildlife such as deer, armadillos and roadrunners are often observed from the Randy Bell Scenic Trail.

Would you believe that bison and bear used to live here, too? In his 1832 bestselling book, *A Tour on the Prairies*, Washington



Irving wrote about his adventures exploring the west including a stay in the Cross Timbers. “After a tedious ride of several miles, we came out upon an open tract of hill and dale, interspersed with woodland. Here we were roused by the cry, Buffalo! Buffalo! Three or four of those enormous animals were visible to our right[,] grazing on the slope of a distant hill.”

## 4 Like a Thousand Tiny Crystals

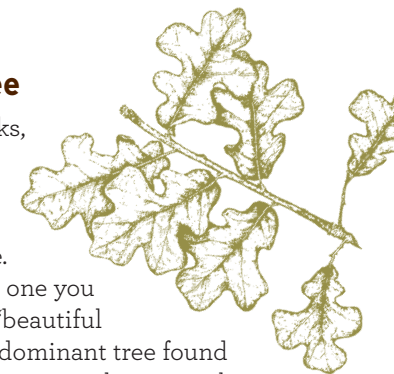
Little Bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is one of the “big four” tallgrass prairie species common to this region. Bunch grasses like Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Indiangrass and Switchgrass once grew abundantly in the Post Oak Savannah ecoregion. There are many accounts of settlers and travelers having to stand on their horses to gain a view above the tall grasses. Little Bluestem gets its name from the bluish color of the stems in spring. As summer turns to fall, the grass will take on a deep rusty color. The white, fuzzy flowers of the Little Bluestem stay on the grass over the winter months, the seeds providing vital food for birds. When lit by the sunshine, a prairie of Little Bluestem grass in full bloom takes on the appearance of thousands of tiny crystals shining in the light.



## 5 Beautiful Tree

The Latin name for oaks, *Quercus*, comes from the Celtic word *quer* meaning beautiful and *cuez* meaning tree.

Post Oak trees like the one you see here are certainly “beautiful trees.” Post Oak is the dominant tree found in the woodlands of the Post Oak Savannah. It was used extensively by early settlers for constructing cabins, sheds and barns. The heartwood is especially resistant to decay and insects. You can identify the Post Oak by its leaves that have a cross-like shape.



## 6 Tree of Life

Eastern Red Cedar has long been used by various Native Americans. Many Indians revered the cedar tree as a “tree of life.” In certain Comanche rituals there was a “cedar man” who would place the twigs of the cedar tree on hot coals, which would produce smoke. The Kiowa and other Plains Indians used Eastern Red Cedar in purification and cleansing ceremonies.



Cedar wood is well known for its pleasant smell and attractive red coloring. The wood can retain its odor and color for years and it is still used today to repel insects. Wood from the Eastern Red Cedar like you see here was popular with settlers as a building material for furniture, closets and chests.

## 7 What's Your Story?

The last section of the Randy Bell Scenic Trail will take you through a hilly, wooded portion of the park. You can easily imagine how difficult it might have been to traverse this landscape for weary travelers in the 1800s. This is also a great portion of the trail to listen to the sounds of nature and reflect on the changing landscape around us. You are a part of the stories of the Post Oak Savannah ecoregion just as those who came before us.

