

The Ojito Adentro Trail is located within the Bofecillos Mountains just below Agua Adentro Mountain – 8.5 miles east of Botella Junction (un-manned park entrance) on the Main Park Road to the Saucedo Ranger Station in the park’s interior. The short 0.4-mile-long trail leads to lush springs and a seasonal waterfall named Ojito Adentro. Its name translates to “little spring within.” Bring a camera and binoculars as Ojito Adentro features a distinctive community of riparian plants and animals and is one of the top birding sites in the park.

Like other spots such as Cinco Tinajas, Ojito Adentro is unique because it contains water most of the year, an unusual feature in the dry desert. The springs support many species of plants and animals and has been an important resource for people and wildlife throughout history. The springs are sensitive habitats for plants and animals, so please stay out of the water.

Be mindful of all wildlife and always bring water! Look for signs of wildlife such as scat and tracks as you are hiking. If you encounter a mountain lion do not run, slowly back away and try to look as big as possible. Pick up small children. If you are attacked, fight back. Please report any lion sightings or signs of lions to park rangers immediately.

Always check in with a park ranger about trail and weather conditions before taking any trail in the park.



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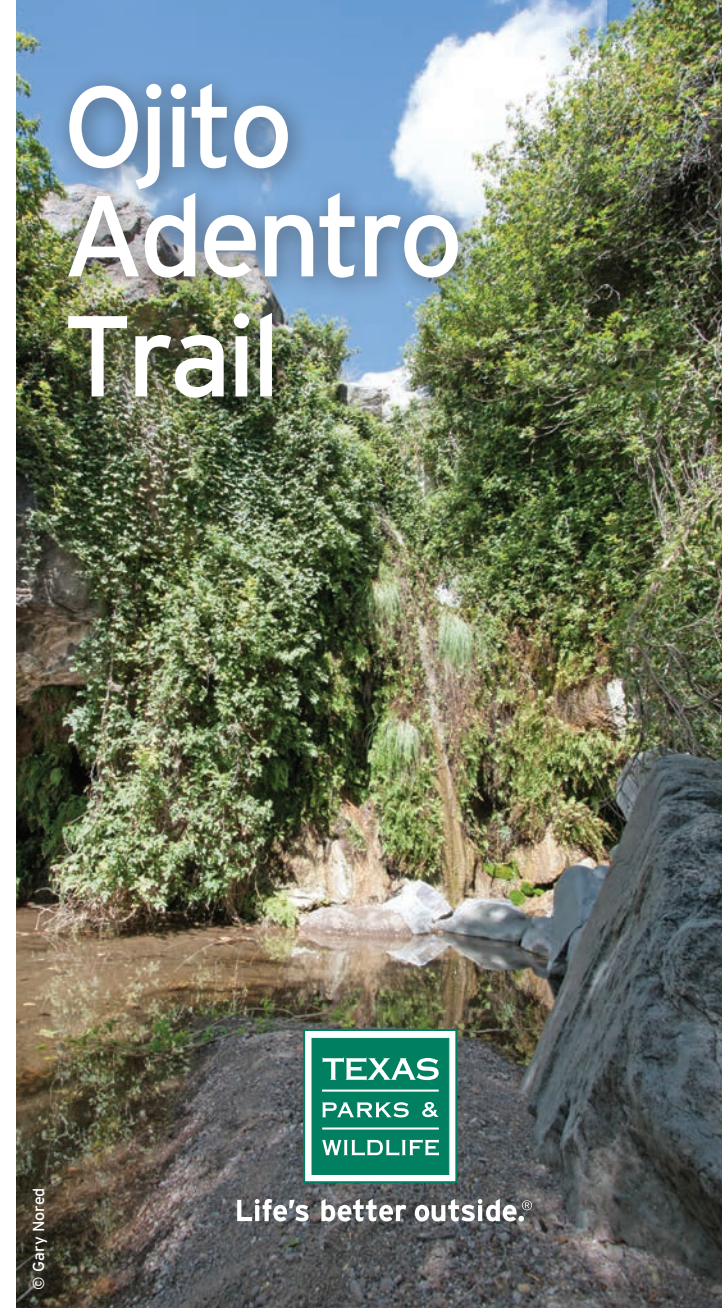
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BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK

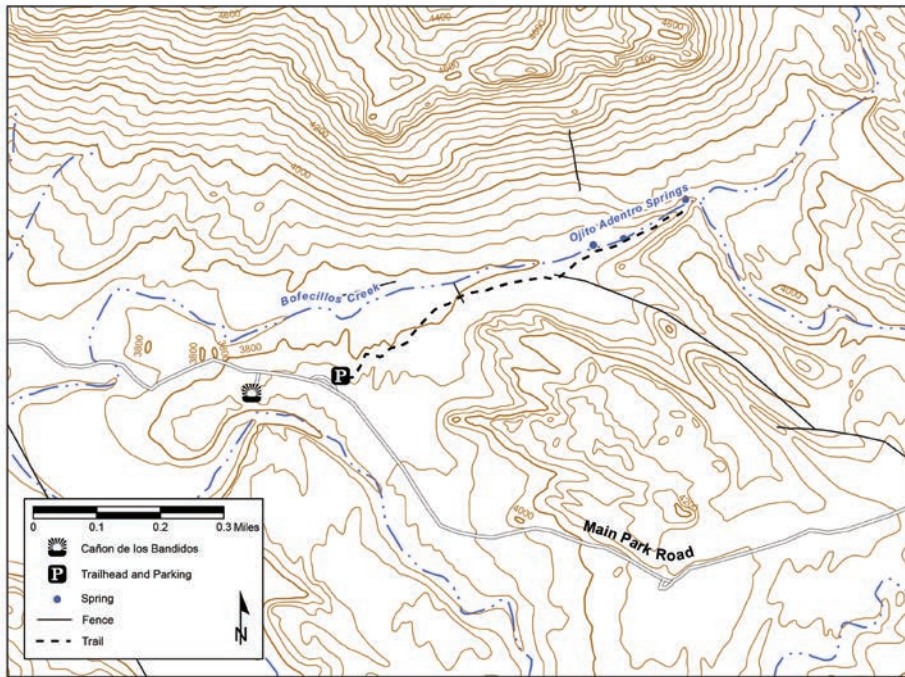
Ojito Adentro Trail



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The trailhead is marked by a wide path between two rock cairns (stacked rocks). Hiking is relatively easy with a few sloping and brushy areas with loose rocks. To reach your destination, walk down to the thick grove of cottonwoods that you can see from the trailhead. Once there, veer to your right and follow the path to its terminus at the pour-off. Some rock scrambling is necessary to get a close view of the springs. Be aware that the path might be dense with vegetation and the ground can be very muddy after heavy rains.



The spring and its associated habitat are known as a riparian zone. A riparian zone is an ecosystem that lies between land and water where water-dependent plants and animals live. Riparian zones can be very extensive and follow the course of entire river systems such as the Rio Grande or they can be small, isolated areas occurring along intermittent streams, creeks, seeps and springs which are common in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

Note the environmental transition from desert scrubland to riparian zone as you get closer to the springs. The landscape near the trailhead is typical of the Chihuahuan Desert, dominated by creosote bush, sotol, lechuguilla, prickly pear and several species of grasses and cacti. As you approach the spring cottonwood trees, willows, grasses, ferns and a variety of forbs dominate the landscape. These plants are reliant on the water that is produced by the springs. Keep your eye out for poison oak when exploring the area.

Like the plants, many animals rely upon the springs for water, shelter and food. Mountain lions, deer, jackrabbits, javelina and a variety of lizard and snake species including copperheads and the western diamondback rattlesnake may be encountered.

The environment also attracts many native and migrating birds. Birds common to the area include: scaled quail, mourning dove, greater roadrunners, ladder-backed woodpeckers, Say's phoebes, loggerhead shrikes, canyon and Bewick's wrens, northern mockingbirds, curve-billed thrashers, canyon towhees, black-throated sparrows, pyrrhuloxia, vermilion flycatchers, swallows, yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds. Raptors such as zone- and red-tailed hawks and peregrine falcons have been sighted at the springs.

As early as the 1880s, ranchers relied heavily on springs like those at Ojito Adentro. Many riparian areas contain remnants of windmills, watering tanks, and stock ponds. The fences and tanks that still stand are a reminder of that time.

Attentive visitors will observe large amounts of dark ashy soil with angular rocks along the banks of the creek; these deposits are referred to by archeologists as "burned rock middens." These middens, hand-ground mortar holes in the nearby bedrock and chipped stone debris are remnants of ancient occupations by Native American peoples. Please respect these deposits and help to preserve them by refraining from collecting or disturbing artifacts.