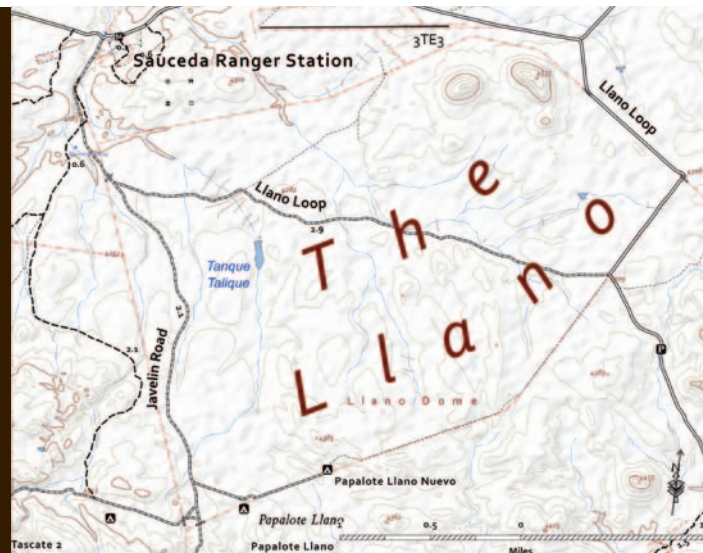




**WHEN BIG BEND RANCH WAS PURCHASED IN 1988 FOR A STATE PARK FROM THE PRIVATELY HELD DIAMOND A CATTLE COMPANY,**

a small herd of Texas Longhorns was included as part of the purchase agreement. This breed was introduced on the Diamond A in the late 1960s because of its well-known adaptability to sparse range conditions, and its disease resistance and ease of reproduction. In addition, during this period, it was popular to have a few iconic Texas Longhorn on ranchland. For the majority of its history, however, what today we call Big Bend Ranch State Park (BBRSP) was a sheep and goat operation, the peak of which occurred during the Fowlkes brothers' ownership from the 1930s to the late 1950s.



Two unpaved roads allow dry-weather, two-wheel-drive public access into the Llano Pasture, where the exhibit animals may be seen. A high-clearance vehicle is recommended for driving into the interior of the pasture, although the northeastern leg of the Llano Loop is suitable for most sedans. Roads may be impassible when wet, even with four-wheel drive. Check with park staff about current road conditions and the suitability of your vehicle. Remember to drive slowly, cautiously and quietly.

**Always view Texas Longhorns from a safe distance.**

**[www.texasstateparks.org](http://www.texasstateparks.org)**

**To learn about the Official State of Texas Longhorn Herd located at Fort Griffin State Historic Site, go to [www.visitfortgriffin.com](http://www.visitfortgriffin.com)**



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TEXAS STATE PARKS

Texas Longhorns at  
**BIG BEND RANCH**  
STATE PARK





## TEXAS LONGHORN LEGACY

Accounts from travelers crossing Texas in the early 1700s include stories of the presence of many wild cattle, often misidentified as native species. Free-range longhorns were considered game, much like deer and buffalo, but were regarded as very wild and even more difficult to hunt. Initially referred to as “Texas cattle” and, later, Texas Longhorns, the animals populated a widespread area by the time Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836. At that time they ranged from the Red River to the Rio Grande, east to the Louisiana line and west to the upper breaks of the Brazos River. These early longhorns continued to roam Texas, almost completely wild until the end of the Civil War.



## THE GREAT CATTLE DRIVES

After the Civil War, Texas veterans returned home to a poor state and devastated economy, but they had access to a boundless marketable commodity—millions of wild longhorn cattle. However, the distance and transportation northward to beef-starved markets presented a challenge. Thus arose the overland cattle drives via the famous cattle trails including the Western, Chisholm, and the Goodnight-Loving trails to the great rail yards in Kansas, Wyoming, and other northern states.

## THE END OF AN ERA

By the early 1900s, the longhorn was regarded as a less desirable breed of cattle. Rail access improved, barbed wire closed the open range, trail drives become memories, and beef cattle were no longer being transported to faraway markets. European breeds that yielded more beef per animal became more popular, and the number of longhorns decreased.

## TEXAS CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Western writer J. Frank Dobie recognized the decline of the Texas Longhorn in the early 1920s and felt it was important to preserve the breed that held such a significant place in Texas history. With assistance from businessman Sid Richardson and rancher Graves Peeler, Dobie helped organize a herd of typical longhorns. The animals were donated to the Texas Parks Board in 1941 as the state herd, and were kept at Lake Corpus Christi State Park near Mathis. Since they were becoming more scarce, the search continued for longhorns, and in 1942 a herd was compiled and kept at Lake Brownwood State Park in Brown County.

Due to challenges at these locations, the Texas State Parks Board began looking for a more permanent home for the herd. Fort Griffin State Park (now the Texas Historical Commission's Fort Griffin State Historic Site) was selected as the permanent home in 1948, and the official herd has been based there ever since. The Official State of Texas Longhorn Herd is now jointly managed by the THC and Texas State Parks, with part of the herd being retained at San Angelo State Park.

## BBRSP RETAINS A FEW LONGHORNS IN THE PARK FOR VISITORS TO VIEW.

The cattle you can observe today in the Llano Pasture represent true-to-type Texas Longhorns and provide examples of the highly variable coloration and patterns that occur within the breed. In the words of J. Frank Dobie, Texas Longhorns are “more varied than the colors of the rainbow.” The roans, brindles, speckled patterns, linebacks, grullas, reds, yellows, oranges, browns, and blacks come from varying amounts and patterns of only two pigments—red and black—on different parts of the body. The characteristic horns for which the breed was named can extend to seven feet tip-to-tip in steers. Some horns have a slight upward turn at their tips, occasionally with up to three twists.