

*Interpretive Guide to:*

# CLEBURNE

## STATE PARK



Camp Creek Bridge, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, is easy to see from the scenic park road.

FROM 1935 TO 1940, THE YOUNG MEN OF THE CCC BUILT A DAM TO IMPOUND SPRING-FED CEDAR LAKE, THE PARK ROAD, AND OTHER FACILITIES USING LOCAL MATERIALS AND MANUAL LABOR. WORKS PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION CREWS CONTINUED WORK AT THE PARK THROUGH 1944. TODAY YOU CAN ENJOY FISHING, SWIMMING, OR BOATING ON THE 116-ACRE NO-WAKE LAKE, CAMP OUT UNDER THE STARS, OR HIKE AND BIKE THE PARK'S WINDING TRAILS.



## THINGS TO DO AT CLEBURNE STATE PARK

Cleburne State Park is a quiet retreat with a rich history, under an hour's drive from Fort Worth. We hope you enjoy your visit!

- Cast your line into Cedar Lake and see what you catch. The fishing trails will take you to some of the best fishing spots on the lake where you can catch largemouth bass, crappie, catfish, and bluegill.
- Enjoy the park's mountain biking trails that wind through shaded landscapes, around Cedar Lake, and past the CCC spillway. Beginner riders should be cautious; some of the trails are challenging and have steep descents and climbs.
- Take a swim or launch a boat on Cedar Lake. Boating is low speed only (no wake), which makes the 116-acre lake ideal for canoeing, kayaking, and paddle boating.
- Camp out under the stars, relax in a screened shelter, or rent out the Group Camp or Cedar Lodge group facilities for your next reunion.
- Hike the park's trails to discover rugged limestone hills and stunning views. The trails range from easy to challenging – be sure to get a trail map at park headquarters.

Please help us care for the natural and cultural resources of Cleburne State Park by leaving things as you found them and staying on designated trails. All animals, plants, fossils, and artifacts are protected by state law so that everyone can enjoy them.

Cleburne State Park  
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Civilian Conservation Corps Company 3804 in 1939

## BUILDING PARKS – CREATING HOPE

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of his New Deal for America, an economic plan to help the country recover from the Great Depression. CCC work improved undeveloped land across the country, and gave hope and income to the enrollees and their families. The young men of the CCC left life on Depression-era farms to spend their days building Cedar Lake and its scenic roadway for you to enjoy.

The City of Cleburne acquired and donated 508 acres of land in 1935 for development of a state park. CCC Company 3804 lived here from 1935 to 1940, transforming this land from hardscrabble cedar brakes to a recreational oasis. In addition to the dam, Cedar Lake, and the park road, the 200-man camp also built entrance portals, a park residence, a maintenance area, and outdoor fireplaces.

To keep them occupied after work hours, the CCC enrollees had boxing, wrestling, baseball, volleyball, and swimming to keep them fit, and a workshop, classrooms, a library, and a reading room to keep their minds sharp.

After CCC Company 3804 left Cleburne State Park in August of 1940, the Works Projects Administration (WPA), a different New Deal program, came in to finish work on the park. WPA labor completed a concession building, a bathhouse, and a sewer and water system. As the years passed, some buildings fell into disrepair and were replaced. Today, visitors can still enjoy the scenic park roadway, Camp Creek Bridge, Cedar Lake, and admire the work that went into the dam and spillway.

## NATURAL WONDERS

The rugged landscape at Cleburne State Park began as a shallow sea during the Cretaceous age. This ancient sea left traces of fossils in the local limestone, and supports a rich ecosystem at the park today.

USFWS/STEVE MASLOWSKI



Ashe juniper, commonly known as cedar, covers the park's chalky white bluffs. The park also supports Texas red oaks, live oaks, and bur oaks. The combination of mature Ashe juniper and oak woodlands creates the right habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler. These endangered birds are

threatened by habitat loss. Development has reduced their range to a few dozen counties in central Texas, but visitors still occasionally spot these rare birds in the park. The park's juniper oak woodland is also habitat for a rare orchid species.

Cleburne State Park is in a transition area between western and eastern vegetation zones – this means visitors can see desert plants like yuccas and prickly pear cactus next to temperate tree species including American sycamore, black walnut, eastern cottonwood, and cedar elm.

Cedar Lake and the surrounding woodlands are home to a variety of wildlife. You might see a coyote, a fox, or a bobcat searching for prey, or hear an armadillo shuffling through the brush. Cast your line into the clear, cool, spring-fed waters of Cedar Lake where you can catch largemouth bass, crappie, catfish, and bluegill. Over 300 species of birds have been sighted in Cleburne State Park. Visit the lake to see great blue herons and osprey fishing, or look for ladder-backed and downy woodpeckers in wooded areas.

## THE PEOPLE BEFORE THE PARK

Cleburne was an oasis for people long before the Civilian Conservation Corps started work here in 1935. Prehistoric families hunted, foraged, and camped nearby for thousands of years. This area was home to various Native American groups before European settlers arrived. After European settlement, Comanches trailed their horses through here, following the creek south to the Brazos River, and Chisholm Trail cattle drovers stopped nearby to water their herds.

Settlers used the springs that now feed Cedar Lake for watering cattle, but the park land probably wasn't farmed due to the rugged limestone terrain. Nearby residents noticed the area would be an excellent location for a park in the early 1930s, and local businessmen worked to secure the land for a state park.

The park shares the same name as the nearby city of Cleburne. Cleburne was named in honor of Confederate Civil War General Patrick R. Cleburne. General Cleburne commanded troops from all over the south in his Division of the Army of Tennessee, and many local men served with him.

Before the Civilian Conservation Corps built a dam to impound Cedar Lake, the natural springs here sustained Native American groups and European settlers.

