



THE SPARKLING, CLEAR WATERS OF LAKE WHITNEY CREATE AN OASIS IN THE TEXAS GRAND PRAIRIE. LAKE WHITNEY STATE PARK OFFERS VISITORS A CHANCE TO CAMP ON THE SHORES OF A WATER WONDERLAND NOTED FOR ITS WORLD-CLASS FISHING. THE PARK'S OAK WOODLANDS AND PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS PROVIDE OUTSTANDING WILDLIFE VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES.



### THINGS TO DO AT LAKE WHITNEY SP

- Take a hike on the nature trail and explore the flora and fauna of the park. Check for scheduled hikes with a ranger or pick up a trail guide at the park office.
- Watch the wildlife that live in the park. Morning and evening are the best times to see white-tailed deer, armadillos, raccoons and skunks. Please don't feed the wildlife—nature's foods are healthier.
- Go fishing for bass, stripers and catfish. No fishing license is required if fishing within the state park. Be sure to ask park staff about our tackle loaner program.
- Get your binoculars and look for the over 190 species of birds sighted at Lake Whitney, including raptors, songbirds and waterfowl.
- Learn to be a good steward of the park by becoming a Junior Ranger at Lake Whitney State Park. Ask at the park office for the Junior Ranger journal.
- Enjoy the stars and dark night skies. Check the park's calendar of events for star parties hosted by local astronomy clubs.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Lake Whitney State Park. Please help us care for the natural and cultural resources of the park by leaving things as you find them. All of the animals, plants, rocks, fossils and artifacts are protected so that everyone can enjoy these natural treasures. Check the State Park Store for souvenirs of your visit.

Lake Whitney State Park  
P.O. Box 1175 • 433 FM 1244, Whitney, TX 76692  
(254) 694-3793 • [www.tpwd.texas.gov/lakewhitney/](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/lakewhitney/)

Cover photo courtesy of Lauren Staley.



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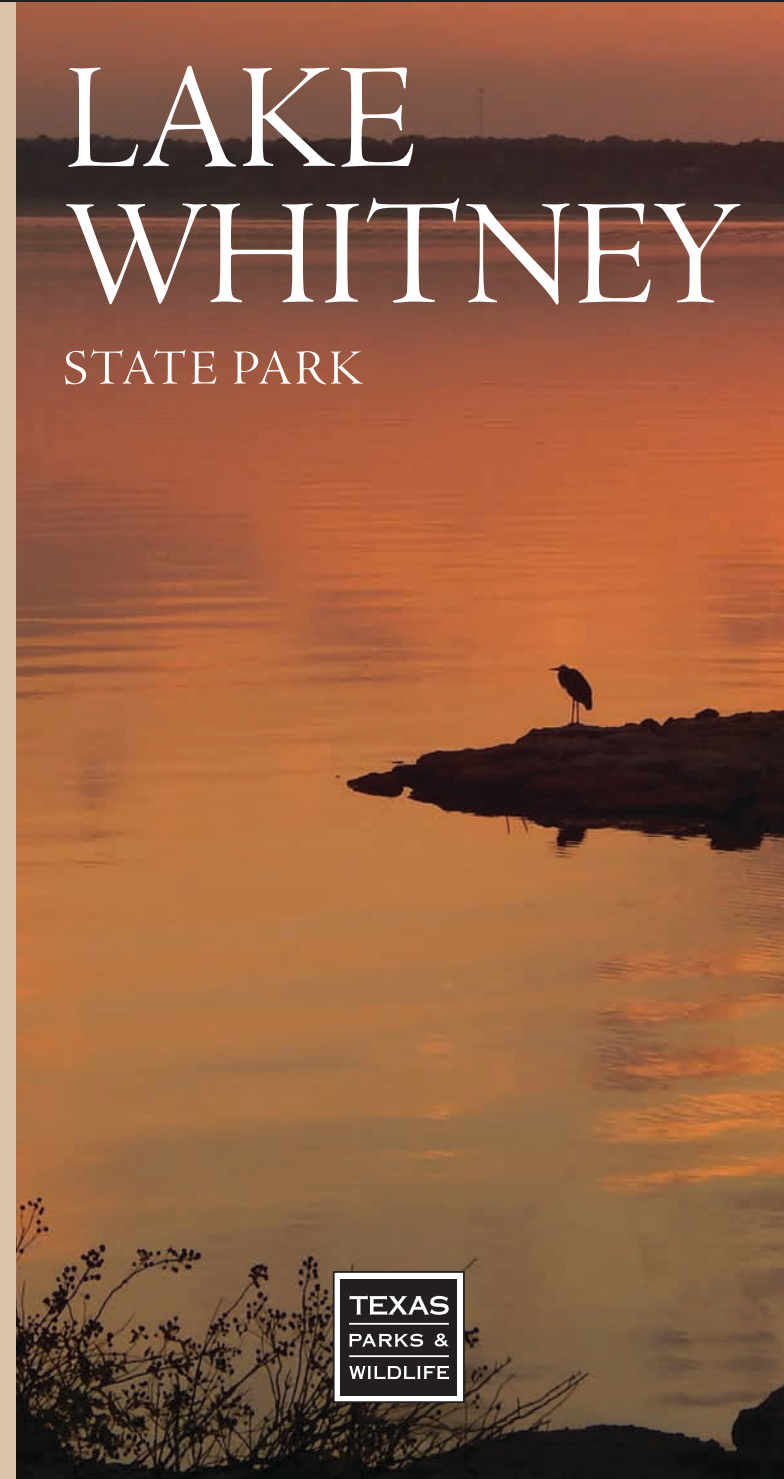
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INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

# LAKE WHITNEY

## STATE PARK



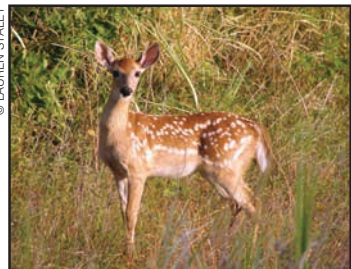
## THE LEGENDARY BRAZOS

A Texas legend, the Brazos River cuts a path through the heartland of Texas from the Panhandle to the coast south of Houston. Spanish explorers thankful for fresh water named the river “Brazos de Dios” or the “Arms of God.” The Comanches called it “tohopt pah-e-hone” or “blue water river,” and used it as a travel route into central Texas from their homelands in the Staked Plains. Western songs and folklore popularized the river as cattle drives crossed the Brazos at Waco and Kimball Bend.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Brazos River in 1951, creating Lake Whitney. Named for the nearby community of Whitney, the large lake covers 37 square miles with over 225 miles of shoreline. A power plant at the dam generates electricity as water is released downstream.

With the Brazos prone to occasional flooding, Lake Whitney holds over 2 million acre-feet of water (about 2 million football fields covered with 12 inches of water) at flood level, protecting Waco and other communities. In 2015, a series of heavy rainfalls caused the lake to rise to near historic levels. Unfortunately much of the State Park flooded but the dam protected residents downstream.



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*The valley of the Brazos at this place abounded with every species of timber known in Texas, grapes, plums, and other fruit were found in profusion, honey could be obtained in almost every hollow tree, trout and other fish were plentiful in the small creeks in the neighborhood, and the woods and prairies about us afforded excellent grazing for our cattle and horses, but teemed with every species of game— elk, deer, bears, wild turkeys, and at the proper season, buffalo and mustang.*

J. A. Kendall, Narrative of the Texas Santa Fe Expedition, 1844



© SANDRA DAVIS

During the spring and summer, the prairie comes alive with wildflowers like these Texas bluebonnets in blue, pink and white.

## THE WASHITA PRAIRIE

Lake Whitney State Park lies on the Washita Prairie, the eastern edge of the greater Grand Prairie that stretches from the Red River south to the Colorado River. The Washita Prairie landscape features gently rolling grasslands of little bluestem and Indiangrass. Isolated trees and oak stands crown the hilltops. Brown, shallow soils cover a foundation of hard limestone rock, creating rugged white outcrops where the soil erodes away. Ribbons of woodlands follow the creeks and streams feeding the Brazos River.

Along the nature trail you’ll find netleaf hackberry, cedar elm, post oak, soapberry and plateau live oak. The prairie bursts into bloom each spring with over 40 species of wildflower, supporting pollinating birds and insects. Listen for the sound of woodpeckers tapping into the hardwood in search of insects. Often used for grazing, the Washita Prairie provides a diverse habitat for wildlife. White-tailed deer browse the grasslands, taking cover from the heat in shady, wooded areas. Listen for the sounds of armadillos, the “little armored ones,” scratching through the grasses along the nature trails.

## TRACES OF THE PAST



The abundance of the Brazos River Valley provided a hospitable landscape for human occupation for many centuries. Archeologists have discovered prehistoric sites dating back more than 12,000 years along this river valley. Native Americans settled along the banks of the Brazos in this area during the 1800s with members of the Comanche and Taovaya Indians migrating in the 1820s. A village of Caddos farmed near here in the 1840s, reportedly growing maize and watermelon while one thousand horses grazed on the lush grasslands.

In the early 1850s, Anglo-American pioneers displaced a community of Hainai/Ioni living here since around 1835. Towash, the Hainai chief, moved his people upstream. The Anglo-American settlers adopted the chief’s name for their community. Lake Whitney covers the remnants of the once-thriving town that boasted a water-powered gristmill and wool-carding machine. Many Towash businesses and settlers relocated to nearby Whitney after the arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad in 1876.

