

THE SEASONS OF CHANGE ARE ALL AROUND YOU AT FAIRFIELD LAKE STATE PARK. AUTUMN HERALDS THE RETURN OF BALD EAGLES TO THE LAKE. COLORFUL PAINTED BUNTINGS FLASH BRILLIANT AGAINST THE NEW FOLIAGE OF SPRING, AND LAZY CICADAS BUZZ IN THE SUMMER HEAT. LIFE IS FULL OF CHANGE, BUT FAIRFIELD LAKE STATE PARK WILL ALWAYS BE A PEACEFUL PLACE TO REST AND REFLECT, SURROUNDED BY NATURE.



OWL AND COVER PHOTO: KATE SHERMAN, TPWD

Things to do at Fairfield Lake State Park

- ✦ Take a hike on a 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 180 species of birds sighted at Fairfield Lake State Park, including herons, raptors, songbirds, and waterfowl.
- ✦ Learn to be a good steward of the park by becoming a Junior Ranger at Fairfield Lake State Park. Ask at the park office for the Junior Ranger journal.
- ✦ Leave no trace! Help our wildlife by disposing of garbage and fishing line, staying on trails, and leaving natural treasures for everyone to enjoy.
- ✦ Check the State Park Store for souvenirs of your visit.

For more information about programs or volunteering, contact the park or visit our website and add us on Facebook.

Fairfield Lake State Park
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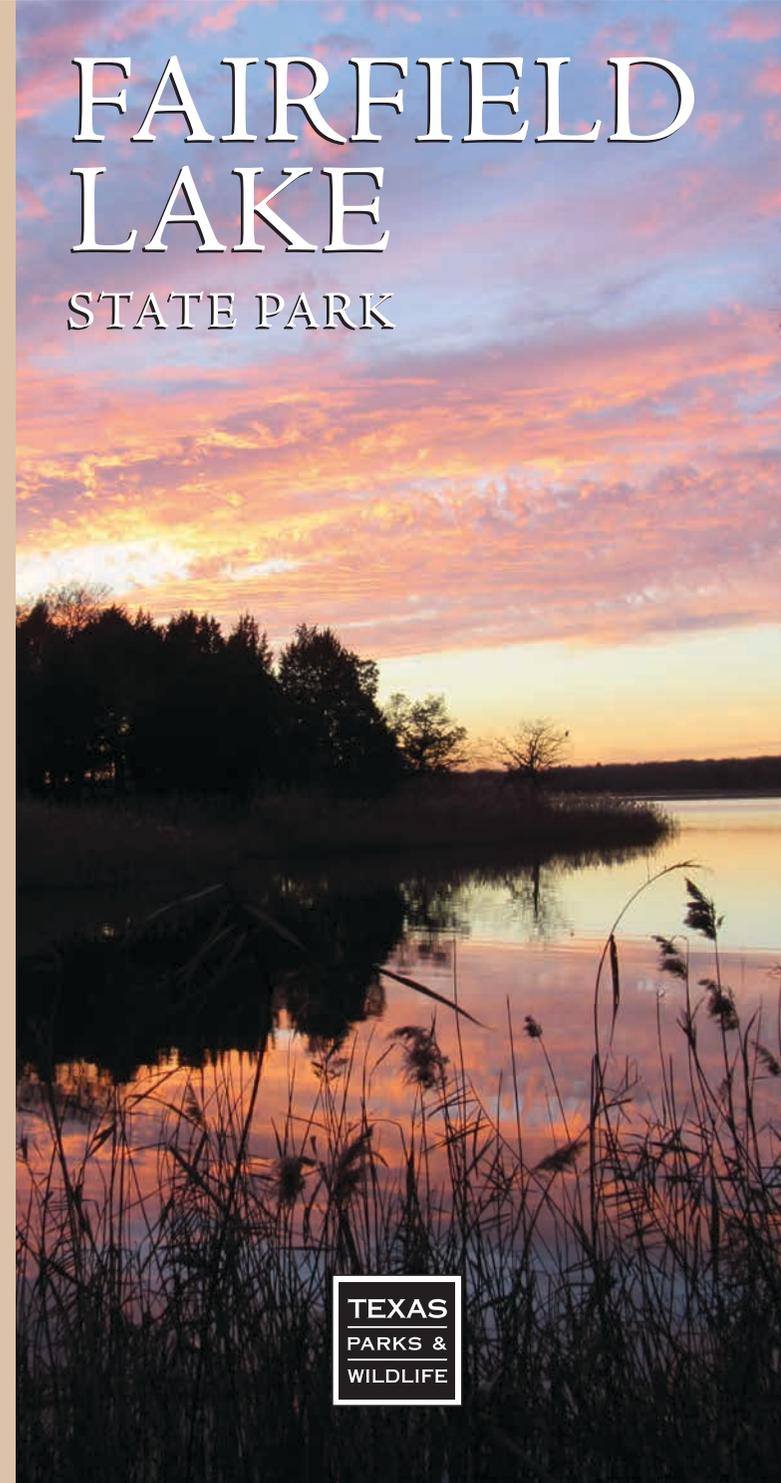


Texas State Parks is a division of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.



INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

FAIRFIELD LAKE STATE PARK





KATE SHERMAN, TPWD

NATURE ABOUND

Fairfield Lake State Park lies in the forested eastern edge of Freestone County, near the Trinity River. As you hike along the trails, look for changes in the scenery. Towering elm, pecan, and ash trees grow in the rich bottomlands along the Big Brown Creek. Water from the creek supports these large trees and lush undergrowth. Along the lake's edge, wetland cattail, bulrush, and water lily create a marshland oasis for birds, turtles, and frogs. Moving upland, post oaks dominate the drier landscape.

These diverse habitats support a variety of life. Deer quietly move through the park, thoughtfully observing campers as they graze. River otters are a delight to watch as they play in the river and lake. The cacophony of waterfowl and shorebirds is a musical reminder of the



importance of this lake environment. In November, one of the most iconic residents of the park returns. Bald eagles spend the winter months at the lake, impressing even the most experienced fisherman with their fishing prowess.

As you enjoy your time at Fairfield Lake State Park, remember that there is always plenty to see and do. The changing seasons bring new worlds to explore, and new wildlife to discover. Help protect our plants and animals by throwing away your trash and staying on the trails.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

In 1969, the Texas Power and Light Company constructed a dam on Big Brown Creek to create Fairfield Lake. The 2,500-acre lake would serve as a cooling reservoir for the Big Brown Power Plant. The coal plant went into operation in 1971. Fairfield Lake State Park, built on the southwestern shores of the lake, opened to the public in 1976.

Warmed by the power plant, the lake maintained warmer than average temperatures year-round. Fishermen flocked to the warm waters in winter to catch redfish, stripers, catfish, and largemouth bass. But another species of fish took advantage of the artificially warmed waters of Fairfield Lake. Blue tilapia are a tropical species not native to Texas. This hearty invader thrives in warm waters and competes with the native species.

In 2018, facing costly renovations, the Big Brown Power Plant closed its doors and shutdown production. As the waters cool, Texas Parks and Wildlife staff are closely monitoring the water quality. How will this change affect the fish, wildlife, and the park moving forward? We don't yet know the answer to these questions. Ecosystems are held in a delicate balance and it is difficult to predict, what, if any, effect changes will have on the plant and animal communities. What we do know is that Texas Parks and Wildlife will continue to work hard to preserve special places like Fairfield Lake State Park for you and future generations to enjoy.



LARRY HODGE, TPWD

COTTON TO CONTRABAND

After the Civil War, Freestone County's economy was booming. Farmers produced cotton, tobacco, and food crops in the good quality soil. But by 1920, the agricultural community declined dramatically. Freestone County lost almost 800 farms between 1920-1925. During this time, some enterprising families looked to unlawful activities to make an income.

In 1920, the United States banned the manufacturing and sale of alcohol. Many saw the ban as an opportunity and illegal distilleries popped up across the nation. Freestone County gained notoriety for producing quality moonshine, likely in part due to the high mineral content in the local water. Their whiskey became known as Freestone County Bourbon Deluxe. The Texas Rangers routinely searched the forested lands, destroying stills and hauling moonshiners off to prison. Many families were simply trying to earn a living during a desperate time. Others became wealthy thanks to their involvement in the moonshining trade.

Times have changed. The soft low lamplight of a moonshiner's camp has long since disappeared and the forests have swallowed the old stills. If you find remnants from the past, please tell a ranger and do not take or move them. These artifacts tell the story of our history and are for everyone to enjoy.



FREESTONE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM