



KENNETH SANTONGE, TPWD



INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

RAY ROBERTS LAKE

STATE PARK COMPLEX

ISLE DU BOIS UNIT

JOHNSON BRANCH UNIT

GREENBELT UNIT

With over a quarter of the state's population living in the North Central Texas area, natural wild spaces become even more precious. Ray Roberts Lake State Park provides a safe haven for native wildlife and a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

While enjoying this natural beauty, please remember that everything you see in the park is protected. Artifacts, rocks, plants, and animals (even snakes) are all part of the region's rich cultural and natural heritage. Help us keep recreational use sustainable for the future and protect these resources by leaving things as you find them.

We hope you also explore these other North Texas natural wonders:

Eisenhower SP, 50 Park Road 20, 75020; (903) 465-1956

Bonham SP, 1363 State Park 24, 75418; (903) 583-5022

Cedar Hill SP, 1570 FM 1382, 75104; (972) 291-3900

Lake Mineral Wells SP, 100 Park Road 71, 76067; (940) 328-1171

Visit www.tpwd.texas.gov for more information on these and other Texas state parks and historic sites.

Ray Roberts Lake State Park Complex Offices:

Isle du Bois Unit
100 PW 4137

Pilot Point, TX 76258
(940) 686-2148

Johnson Branch Unit
100 PW 4153

Valley View, TX 76272
(940) 637-2294

www.tpwd.texas.gov/rayrobertslake



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KENNETH SANTONGE, TPWD



TUCKED AWAY ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE DFW METROPLEX, RAY ROBERTS LAKE STATE PARK IS A HIDDEN GEM WAITING TO BE EXPLORED. HERE YOU'LL DISCOVER A BLEND OF PRAIRIE AND WOODLAND BEAUTY UNIQUE TO NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS AND A RICH CULTURAL HISTORY.



A variety of outdoor recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, and camping are accessible from the park's different units: the Isle du Bois unit on the southeast shore, the Johnson Branch unit on the north shore, and a greenbelt corridor along the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. The park also has five satellite units around the lake with boat ramps at Buck Creek, Jordan, Pecan, Sanger, and Pond parks.

Ray Roberts Lake provides water for the cities of Dallas and Denton. Originally known as Lake Aubrey, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the dam in 1987 to impound the 29,000-acre reservoir. The lake's name changed in 1980 to honor the accomplishments of Denton's legendary U.S. Congressman, Ray Roberts, who represented the area from 1962 to 1982. Roberts was affectionately known as "Mr. Water" for his leadership and foresight in managing and conserving the water resources of Texas. Ray Roberts Lake is the first in a series of reservoirs that captures the waters of the Trinity River watershed, the largest and most populated watershed in Texas.

Congressman
Ray Roberts



CROSSROADS OF DIVERSITY

“A grassland is in many ways an upside-down world . . . Life thrives in an underworld of roots, which are the living heart of grasses and perennial plants.”

Mary Taylor Young,
*Land of Grass and Sky –
A Naturalist's Prairie Journey*

Imagine life in North Texas hundreds of years ago, before cars, subdivisions, and malls. Picture vast prairies, rich forests, and clear running rivers and streams. As you explore the natural beauty that is Ray Roberts Lake State Park, you are taking a step back in time. Here you can observe picturesque landscapes and, if you're lucky, spot some of their inhabitants; Ray Roberts Lake State Park is an oasis for wildlife.

The park's incredible biological diversity comes from its crossroads of ecological regions. Most of the park lies within the Eastern Cross Timbers, a thin band of forest spanning 500 miles from southeast Kansas to Waco like a river of trees. The forest is home to white-tailed deer, bobcats, squirrels, cottontail rabbits, raccoons, and striped skunk. You'll spot mockingbirds and painted buntings flitting among the trees. Interspersed throughout the forest is a mosaic of small pockets of prairie, known as “prairie glades.”

True prairies lie to the east and west of the forest. The eastern Northern Blackland Prairie once stretched from Texas to Canada. Tallgrass prairies, including Texas' Blackland Prairie, were once a vast sea of big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian-grass, and switchgrass. Farming and development diminished prairies, forever changing the historic landscape. Currently, the park is working to restore these prairies.

To the west of the Cross Timbers is the Grand Prairie (also known as the Fort Worth Prairie). The Grand Prairie is similar to the Blackland Prairie, but flatter and drier. It is a shorter mid-grass prairie dominated by little bluestem and side-oats grama. Among the grasslands

you can find coyotes, armadillos, roadrunners, and scissor-tailed flycatchers.

Together, the biodiversity of the Cross Timbers and prairie ecosystems found within the park provide a link to the past and a promise that wildlife and their habitat will continue to thrive far into the future.

ECHOES ACROSS TIME

“The tallgrass prairie was a wondrous ecosystem but because of its rich, fertile soil, it drew the lustful gaze of settlers and was the first prairie nation to fall victim to an indomitable foe – the plow.”

Mary Taylor Young,
Land of Grass and Sky – A Naturalist's Prairie Journey

As you explore the vast natural beauty that is Ray Roberts Lake State Park, imagine the people who called this place home hundreds or thousands of years ago. This window into the past reveals signs of the previous human generations who left their mark on the landscape.

Among the earliest were the Paleo-Indians, who hunted and camped along the shores. Always on the move in search of wild game, these ancestors left behind evidence of their travels in the form of a 12,000-year-old Clovis point.

Native peoples lived and used the land and its resources for centuries. European explorers “discovered” this area around 1500. French explorers marveled at the seemingly vast ocean of tall prairie grasses, then struggled through a near impenetrable band of forest: the Eastern Cross Timbers. They dubbed the forest “Isle du Bois,” French for island of trees.

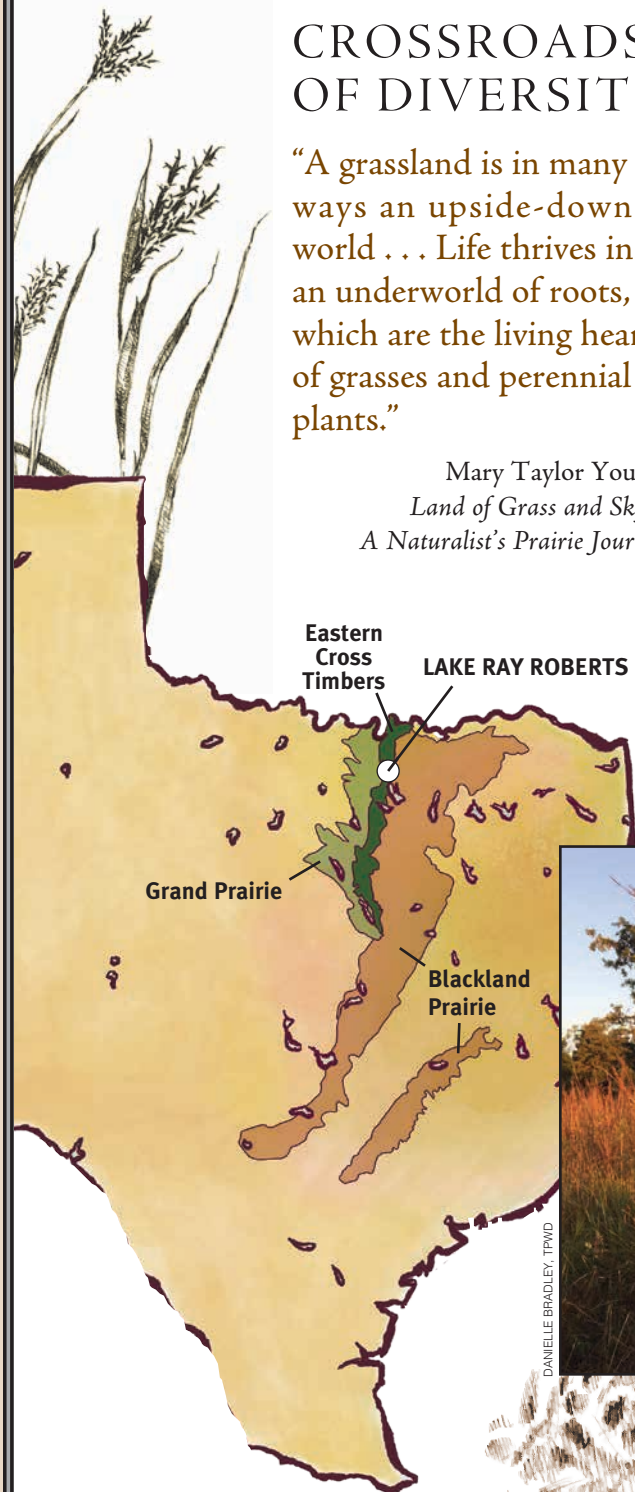
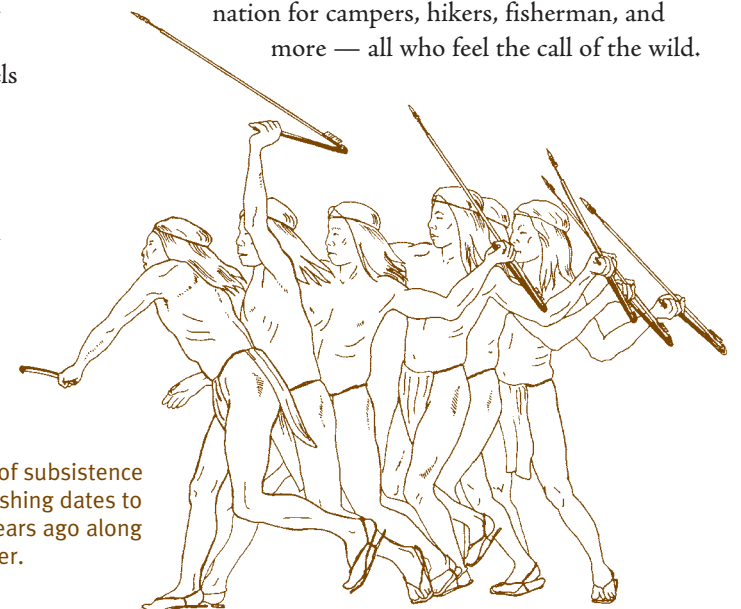
The evidence of subsistence hunting and fishing dates to over 12,000 years ago along the Trinity River.



RICK TORRES, TPWD

With the exploration and mapping of the region, settlement was not far behind. By the mid-1840s Euro-American settlers from eastern states began to homestead and farm the area, often clashing with the Comanche, Kiowa, and Tonkawa Native Americans. The Johnson Branch unit is named after the Johnson and Jones families who farmed the prairies near Valley View in the late 19th century. Plenty of evidence of these homesteaders remains here today, including the Jones Farm and the chimney site.

Echoes heard here today are those of recreation and enjoyment. Ray Roberts Lake State Park is a destination for campers, hikers, fisherman, and more — all who feel the call of the wild.



DANIELLE BRADLEY, TPWD