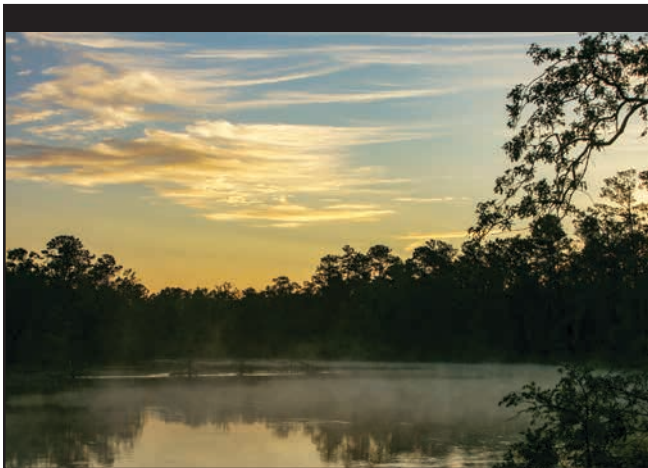




INTERPRETIVE GUIDE



VILLAGE CREEK STATE PARK OFFERS 1,090 ACRES OF HIKING, FISHING, WILDLIFE VIEWING, AND PADDLING IN AN EAST TEXAS ECOSYSTEM OF INCREDIBLE DIVERSITY AND NATURAL BEAUTY. BOTTOMLAND FOREST ALONG THE NECHES RIVER GIVES WAY TO THE ONLY LONGLEAF PINE SAVANNA IN THE TEXAS STATE PARK SYSTEM. HIKING TRAILS MEANDER THROUGH A DENSE LATTICE OF PINE AND MIXED HARDWOOD FORESTS. PLANTS ADAPTED TO DRY WESTERN LANDS GROW ON HIGH SANDY GROUND ABOVE CYPRESS-FILLED WATERS. THE PARK'S CONTRASTING LANDSCAPES SUPPORT A STUNNING VARIETY OF LIFE.



Wild blueberry blossoms

THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

Village Creek State Park is a nature preserve and recreation area. Help us protect the park's resources and ensure your safety by observing park rules. Stay on designated trails. Keep pets on a leash at all times.

Village Creek State Park
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VILLAGE CREEK STATE PARK



THE BIG THICKET

The Big Thicket defines Village Creek State Park. It is a world of bottomland forest and recurring wetlands. Long ago the Neches River was much larger than it is now. Most of the park lies within its broad floodplain marked by river inlets called sloughs. Frequent floods support a rare variety of trees and fill the sloughs with pygmy crayfish. The floods also shaped the landscape into hills, valleys, and flatlands with belts of deep sand and solid clay soils. These features support some of the most diverse communities of wildlife in North America.

The thicket refers to a mature community of understory trees—wax myrtle, yaupon, and tall longleaf pines—and open grasslands that lie above the Neches floodplain.

But this land also includes dry sandy high ground that sustains yucca and prickly pear. It reminds you that this is indeed a world of the unexpected.



Big Thicket Crab Spider with its prey.



Slough at Village Creek State Park.

VILLAGE CREEK

Born in the woods of East Texas, in northwest Hardin County, Village Creek meanders southeast 41 miles to its confluence with the Neches River. One of the few free-flowing flat-water creeks in Texas, Village Creek courses along white sandy beaches and wide sandbars.

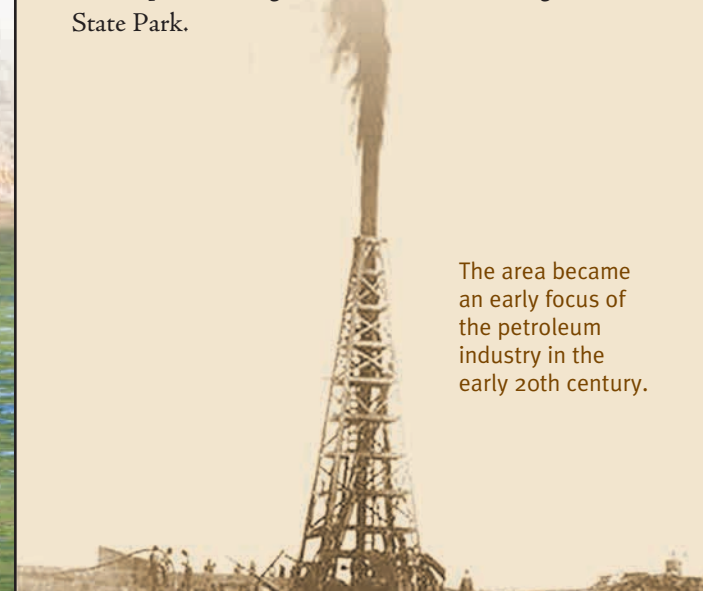
Most days it wanders softly into the Neches River. Rotting plants steep in the water, turning it into a dark tea that feeds life beyond its banks. Bass, crappie, and flathead catfish prowl these dark waters in search of food. Sloughs appear and may change direction with the rise and fall of the creek. Time slows down for paddlers who drift through this lingering Eden. But with heavy rain Village Creek becomes a brute that hurls itself over its banks and surges across the land. Either way, it takes a natural path.



THE PEOPLE

Native people called this area the Big Woods. It gave them a rich storehouse of food and medicines. Here Caddo people from northeast Texas met to trade with Atakapan people. They glided through tangled plant growth in canoes, using a network of waterways as roads. Spanish explorers and missionaries first arrived in the Big Thicket in the 1700s, followed by French colonists. The Alabama and Coushatta tribes settled in the area in the early 1800s, to hunt, raise crops and trade with neighbors.

After Texas joined the United States in 1845, a new wave of American settlers entered the Big Thicket. Their cabins, crops, and communities soon dotted the forest. After the Civil War, a logging boom left only small slivers of virgin timber. Logging gave way to the petroleum industry for which the area is still known. Today, less than three percent remains of the Big Thicket found by Spanish explorers. In the wake of such profound human impact and change, the natural landscape of the Big Thicket lives on at Village Creek State Park.



The area became an early focus of the petroleum industry in the early 20th century.