



INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

STEWARDSHIP OF THE PARK

Undeveloped land such as Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area are becoming increasingly rare. Rapid development continues to destroy and fragment habitat in the surrounding area. Changes in recreation patterns and increased numbers of visitors have placed these precious resources at risk.

An important step toward ensuring the future of this site is to appreciate and gain a better understanding of it. We encourage you as a visitor and user of this sensitive area to join us in this effort.

- Educate yourself about the wonderful natural resources by attending regular weekend programs for families and children, including the Saturday morning Honey Creek hike, night hikes, stargazing, geocaching and much more.
- Protect the natural and historical resources of the area by staying out of closed areas.
- Learn more about German settlement and land management as well as natural resources in the Texas Hill Country.
- Stay on designated trails to further reduce impacts.
- Help keep the area clean by not littering, and take nothing but photographs when you leave.
- Become a volunteer, join the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area, or help by making a monetary donation.

Guadalupe River SP and Honey Creek SNA
3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, TX 78070
(830) 438-2656 • www.tpwd.texas.gov/guadalupe/river/

Friends of Guadalupe River State Park/
Honey Creek State Natural Area:
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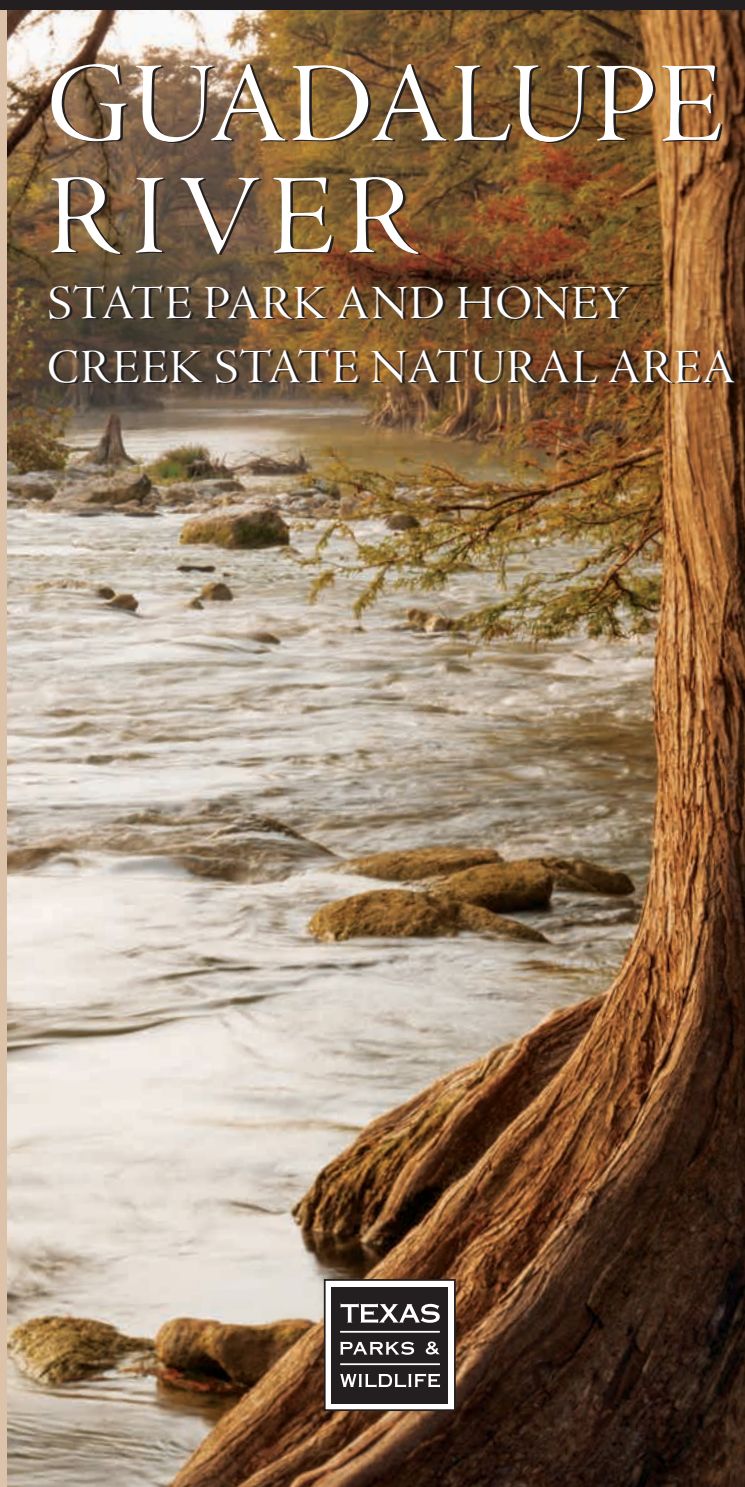


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GUADALUPE RIVER

STATE PARK AND HONEY CREEK STATE NATURAL AREA



CREAMY LIMESTONE CLIFFS AND TOWERING CYPRESS TREES GRIP THE BANKS OF A SEEMINGLY LAZY AND DOCILE RIVER TO CREATE THE FOCAL POINT OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK. THIS IDYLIC SETTING IS THE ONLY DEVELOPED PUBLIC ACCESS POINT TO THE UPPER GUADALUPE, ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC RIVER SECTIONS IN TEXAS. YET THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK THAN THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER. LEAVE THE CROWDS BEHIND AND DISCOVER OTHER WONDERS OF THIS BEAUTIFUL PARK.



BEYOND THE RIVER

While at the park be sure to “take another look” at the children’s Discovery Center. This hands-on facility provides children and adults alike the opportunity to explore skins, skulls, skeletons while interactive exhibits reveal fascinating details of the park’s flora and fauna. Be sure to check out a backpack to continue your exploration along the trails.

Speaking of trails, there are more than 13 miles of hiking trails, including six miles on the Bauer Unit, located across from the day use area. Home to our largest population of the golden-cheeked warbler, trails at the Bauer Unit wind through a mix of grasslands, oak woodlands and stands of old-growth Ashe junipers.

Between headquarters and the river, seven miles of trails wind through grasslands and savannahs once dominated by impenetrable stands of second-growth Ashe juniper. Today you’ll encounter a diverse assemblage of wildflowers including antelope horns milkweed, an important host plant for monarch butterflies. Eastern bluebirds, vermilion, and scissor-tailed flycatchers, along with painted buntings galore nest in these restored habitats.



The Discovery Center offers hands-on experiences for youth and adults.



HONEY CREEK SNA

Adjacent to the park is Honey Creek State Natural Area, home to the spring-fed, pristine and fragile Honey Creek, lined with century-old bald cypress trees dripping with Spanish moss. Adjacent woodlands are home to stands of dwarf palmetto, red buckeye, sycamore, ash and walnut. Water lily-like leaves of spatterdock float on the creek's surface, providing shelter to a rich diversity of aquatic organisms. Each spring, the distinctive, buzzy spring song of the golden-cheeked warbler announces its return while the loud rattle call of the belted kingfisher reverberates up and down the creek throughout the year.

Enjoy this beautiful protected area by joining our weekly Saturday morning guided walk. Beginning at the historic Rust house, you'll learn both cultural and natural history as you pass through restored grasslands and old-growth Ashe juniper, your walk culminating at the breathtaking creek. Occasional night hikes are also offered to enjoy the tranquility of the night along the stream's bank. Along the way, you may hear the steady clicking of the Blanchard's cricket frog, the distinctive call of the barred owl or catch the on-and-off twinkling of fireflies.



"The mountains are cedar bedecked, the valleys contain delightful prairies with occasional groves of trees of ten or twelve varieties of oaks."

C. Hugo Claus (c. 1875), description of the Cibolo and Guadalupe River Valley

KNOWING THE PAST HELPS US PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The fresh, clean, cool waters of the Guadalupe River have been the life force for the plants animals and humans using this area for over 12,000 years. Prehistoric people walked the river's edge you are walking now. They saw the same cliffs and likely enjoyed the river and its natural beauty as they hunted, fished, gathered and processed plant resources.

Spanish explorers discovered these wonders in the early 1700s, but it was over 100 years before European immigrants, mostly German, began to settle here. Their journals and letters described vast prairies, wildfires and migrating bison herds. These grasslands appeared to be an endless supply of food for domestic livestock. But the suppression of fire, fragmentation by fencing, and over-grazing by increasing numbers of cows and goats, decimated the very resource that had attracted the settlers. As a result, native Ashe juniper woodlands (cedar) became the dominant habitat.

Recognizing how past cultures used the land, and the results that followed, can help us develop preservation plans for future sustainability. Every visitor – past, present or future – leaves a mark on the face of the resource that is Guadalupe River State Park.

RESPECTING THE RIVER

The Guadalupe is a true Texas river, flowing entirely within the state. The 2.75-mile portion within the park is wild, rugged and untamed by dams. Respect is required; river conditions can change instantly since the river flows free and is subject to intense flash flooding.

The river is a ribbon of life providing a healthy ecosystem for wildlife as well as people. Its watershed is a major artery of fresh water for central Texas cities, industry, agriculture and recreation. Despite recognition of the river's water quality and scenery, overuse threatens its flow. In 2002 the national non-profit conservation organization American Rivers ranked the Guadalupe River as one of the top 10 most endangered rivers in the United States. Please demonstrate respect for this precious Texas resource through safe and responsible use of the river.

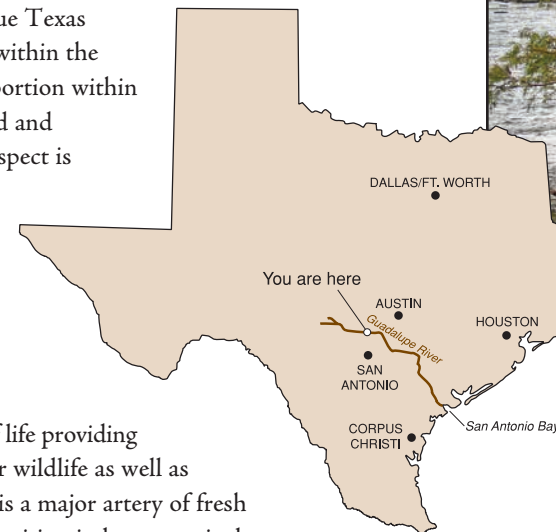
In recent years, TPWD has actively worked to restore several hundred acres of savannah-like grasslands similar to those prior to European settlement 200 years ago. Prescribed burns now maintain this community, providing new habitat for a host of flora and fauna, including the golden-cheeked warbler.



CRAIG HENSLEY



USFWS/STEVE MASLOWSKI



Untamed by dams, the river is subject to flash flooding, which can reach above the cliff tops.



CRAIG HENSLEY

The Nature of the Guadalupe

One of the most compelling attributes of the park is its ecological diversity. The drive from the park headquarters to the river exposes wide-ranging habitats. Initially, moving through uplands of classic Texas Hill Country, notice the open grasslands scattered with oak mottes. Closer inspection reveals many species of grasses and wildflowers. Stands of thick Ashe juniper become dominant on steep rock slopes and valleys of the park, providing welcome shade to hikers and campers. Humidity increases near the river. This riparian habitat, where water meets land, is home to the highest concentration of wildlife.

The diverse plant life provides habitat to many invertebrates, fish and mammals, as well as over 240 species of birds that call this park home. Rare and endangered species survive at the park, including the Cagle's map turtle, Guadalupe bass, golden-cheeked warbler, and the Comal blind salamander. The diverse mammal populations provide excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing. The nature of Guadalupe awaits your discovery and appreciation.