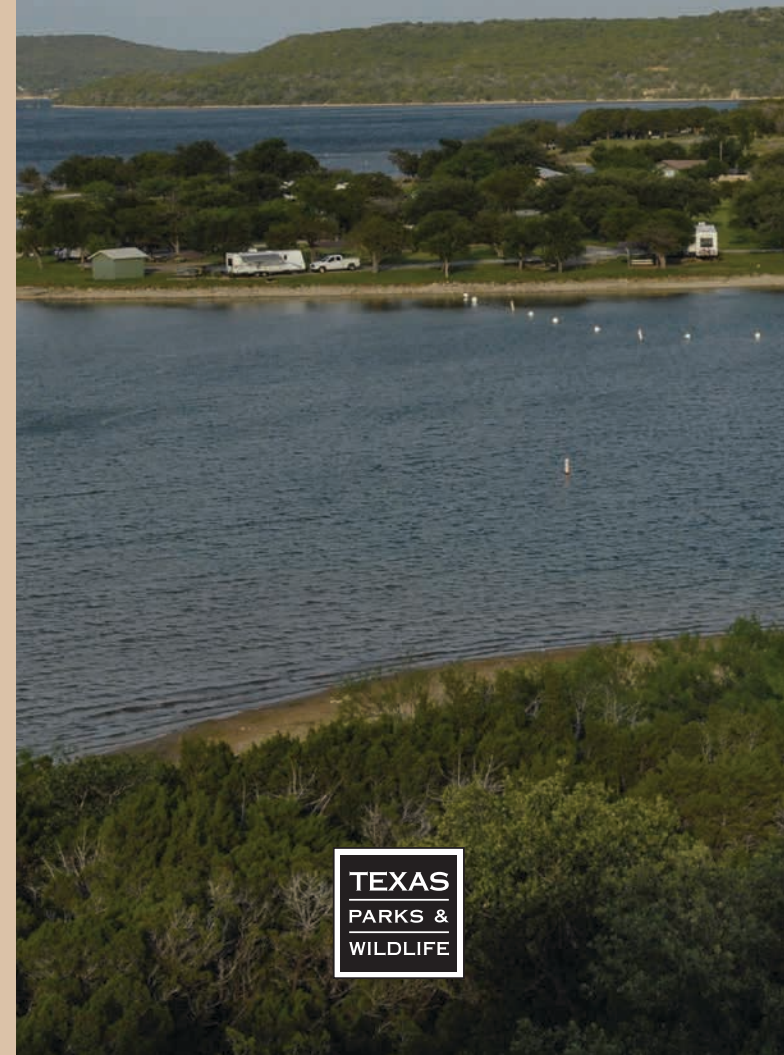




INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

POSSUM KINGDOM STATE PARK



WELCOME TO POSSUM KINGDOM STATE PARK! THIS LAKESIDE OASIS IS NESTLED IN THE GREEN HILLS OF PALO PINTO COUNTY, ONLY TWO HOURS WEST OF DALLAS-FORT WORTH. CAST A LINE IN THE CLEAR WATERS, WATCH DEER GRAZING FROM YOUR CAMPSITE, OR PULL UP A CHAIR AND ENJOY THE WARM CRACKLE OF A CAMPFIRE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. YOU ARE SURE TO FIND PEACE AND RELAXATION AT THIS BEAUTIFUL PARK.



THINGS TO DO AT POSSUM KINGDOM

- 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 200 species of birds sighted at Possum Kingdom State Park, including herons, raptors, songbirds, and waterfowl.
- Enjoy the grandeur of the night sky from your campsite—no telescope needed!
- Learn to be a good steward of the park by becoming a Junior Ranger at Possum Kingdom 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.

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

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(940) 549-1803 • www.tpwd.texas.gov/possumkingdom
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HELP US CONSERVE
PLEASE TURN IN FOR REUSE



WATER: THE LIFE-GIVING FORCE

Water is the life-giving force that connects us all. The Possum Kingdom reservoir was the first water supply reservoir project in the Brazos River Basin. Completed in 1941, the Morris Sheppard Dam impounds approximately 540,000 acre-feet of water, that's the volume of 550 Houston Astrodomes! The reservoir provides communities in the Brazos Basin with clean drinking water, flood-control, and irrigation for crops. The water also attracts recreation seekers coming to enjoy the swimming, fishing, and boating opportunities.

Wildlife also depends upon these precious waters. Fish, including black, white, and striped bass, crappie, and catfish, make their home in the lake. The nearly 300 miles of rich shoreline provide important habitat for migratory and resident waterfowl. Look for tracks in the soft mud along the shore. You'll find evidence of a myriad of wildlife including opossums, the area's namesake, who come down to the lake for a refreshing drink.

All life depends upon clean and reliable water. Good stewardship practices ensure that these beautiful waters will be around for generations of humans and wildlife to enjoy.

Opossum babies are born after just 11-12 days, and are about the size of a honeybee. They live in their mother's pouch for about seven weeks.



LARRY D. MOORE

THE POWER OF FIRE

The landscape of Possum Kingdom State Park tells a story of the destructive and renewing powers of fire. In 2011, a wildfire burned through Stephens, Young, and Palo Pinto counties consuming 148,000 acres and destroying 166 homes. Ninety percent of the park's undeveloped areas burned to varying degrees. Thanks to the tireless efforts of firefighters, the park's public areas and buildings only sustained minor damage.

As you explore the park, you might be surprised at how little evidence remains of the fire. There are still stands of dead trees, but the once charred earth is bursting with life. Plants and wildlife in most parts of Texas, are adapted to, and even dependent upon, periodic fires. This disturbance is a natural part of their world, which creates the habitat conditions required for their survival. Fire clears juniper and allows sunlight to reach the ground, clearing the way for grasses and wildflowers to return. Fire also returns vital nutrients to the soil. Fire-dependent habitats, like the ones at Possum Kingdom State Park, recover rapidly from fires.

The natural cycle of fire and renewal ended when Anglo-Americans settled in Texas. For generations people have suppressed fires to protect themselves, houses, and livestock. In some areas this allowed dangerous "fuel loads" of unburned trees and plants to build up. Dry conditions, high winds, and unseasonably warm temperatures are contributing to an increased number of wildfires that are difficult to contain due to extreme fire behavior. Prescribed burns are a positive alternative to uncontrolled wildfires. With careful planning, Texas Parks and Wildlife fire crews can selectively burn areas, thereby reducing the severity of potential wildfires in the future.

THE CCC LEGACY

In the 1930s the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) helped expand the state and national park systems by creating a work force to develop recreational parks like this one using the natural resources available and recruiting young men in need of employment and job training. The CCC helped stimulate the stagnant local and national economies by providing jobs to young men and income to their families, and by purchasing services and goods from local communities to support the needs of the CCC camp.

In May 1941, CCC Company 2888 moved from Tyler State Park to begin development of Possum Kingdom State Park. The original plans included east and west units on opposite shorelines, but when the lake suddenly filled to capacity in April 1941, designers abandoned the east unit. Enrollees cleared land, built campsites and picnic tables, a caretaker's cabin, entrance portal, and built over seven miles of roads and culverts.

Additional developments were planned for the park, but World War II forced an end to the CCC program. Company 2888 abandoned its barracks (shown below) on July 13, 1942, the last company in Texas to do so. Possum Kingdom State Park represents the end of the Civilian Conservation Corps legacy in Texas.

