



PULL UP A CHAIR AND GATHER AROUND THE CAMPFIRE WHILE YOU RECOUNT THE DAY'S ADVENTURES WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS: A COOL SWIM IN THE LAKE, A PRIZE FISH DANGLING FROM THE LINE, A HIKE THROUGH THE WILDFLOWERS, AND PLAYFUL PRAIRIE DOGS DASHING AROUND THEIR BURROWS. LAKE ARROWHEAD STATE PARK IS A PLACE WHERE MEMORIES ARE MADE.



LAURA CLEPPER

### Things to do at Lake Arrowhead 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.
- ✦ Play a round of disc golf on our 18-hole course. Discs are available to borrow at the headquarters.
- ✦ 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 Lake Arrowhead, including herons, raptors, songbirds, and waterfowl.
- ✦ Learn to be a good steward of the park by becoming a Junior Ranger at Lake Arrowhead 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.

Lake Arrowhead State Park  
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INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

# LAKE ARROWHEAD STATE PARK



## PRECIOUS WATERS

### Can you imagine what this area looked like 75 years ago?

Picture rolling grasslands and the call of wild turkey breaking the silence. The Little Wichita River meanders across the landscape. In the distance you spot smoke gently rising from chimneys in the small community of Halsell. You would not see Lake Arrowhead until years later.

Like most lakes in Texas, Lake Arrowhead is a man-made reservoir. To meet demand for a reliable source of drinking water, the growing city of Wichita Falls decided to dam the Little Wichita River. The residents of Halsell fought the plan but eventually lost their battle in court. Construction on the reservoir began on May 17, 1965. Over the next year, residents of Halsell relocated and their small community was swallowed by the lake.

The waters of Lake Arrowhead are now a precious resource for all who live nearby. Birdlife flourishes along the lake's 106 miles of rich shoreline habitat. Fish such as bass, catfish, and crappie call the cool waters of Lake Arrowhead home. Turtles sunbathe on logs under the warm sun and frogs croak during the cool nights. Deer and coyote come to the lake for a refreshing drink. Human visitors splash in the water and fish from the pier. And beneath the waters lies a community that gave way to this abundance.



LYNN SEMAN



LAURA CLEPPER

*"I can sit on the porch before my door and see miles of the most beautiful prairie interwoven with groves of timber, surpassing, in my mind, the beauties of the sea. Think of seeing a tract of land on a slight incline covered with flowers and rich meadow grass for 12 to 20 miles."*

— John Brooke, early settler in the prairies of Texas, 1849

## RETURNING TO NATURE

Lake Arrowhead lies at the edge of the Rolling Plains and Mesquite Plains sub-region. The park gives visitors a glimpse of the lasting effects of the ranching era on the landscape, and the hope for the future.

The vast prairies of central North America once sprawled from Texas to central Canada. Regular disturbances from fire and grazing bison returned nutrients to the soil, restricted tree encroachment, and helped disperse seeds. The rich biodiversity of these plant communities supported a staggering array of life.

When settlers arrived on the plains, they transformed the landscape. Farmers tilled the soil and replaced prairies with crops. Cattle reduced grass diversity to all but a few species that could withstand the constant grazing. These practices destroyed the delicate balance, resulting in the degradation of much native prairie habitat in Texas.

At Lake Arrowhead State Park, human-mediated prescribed burns restore the natural prairie cycle. Careful removal of non-native and invasive species helps grasses and wildflowers to flourish. As these native plants return, Texas pollinators such as bees, bats, and hummingbirds return as well. Visitors can now hike the trails and enjoy a burst of prairie color in the spring. As these valuable prairie landscapes are restored, wildlife and humans benefit.

## PRAIRIE ENGINEERS

There is something special that draws visitors to the black-tailed prairie dogs of Lake Arrowhead State Park. Perhaps we recognize a little of ourselves in these comical critters with their strong family bonds.

Black-tailed prairie dogs build underground homes with sleeping, nursery, and food chambers. Multiple entrances allow for a quick escape from predators like snakes and black-footed ferrets. Family members greet each other by touching noses and strengthen bonds by grooming one another. When a predator approaches, they alert their family to the danger. Prairie dogs have a unique call for each predator, warning others to watch for a hawk swooping from above or a slithering snake on the ground.

Black-tailed prairie dogs range from southern Canada through the central United States. They are important engineers of prairie grasslands. They clear tall vegetation, making it easier to spot predators, while also limiting the spread of trees. Their burrowing activity helps to aerate the soil, improving plant growth and diversity. Abandoned burrows provide homes for other prairie species like burrowing owls and snakes.

Spend some time with the prairie dogs at Lake Arrowhead State Park but make sure not to feed them. Their natural diet of vegetation and insects is necessary for a thriving prairie for all to enjoy!

