



CHRIS SHEFFIELD, TPWD

NESTLED IN RUGGED HILLS HALFWAY BETWEEN FORT WORTH AND ABILENE SITS AN ESCAPE TO NATURE KNOWN AS PALO PINTO MOUNTAINS STATE PARK. HERE, YOU CAN EXPLORE OVER 12 MILES OF TRAILS ON FOOT, BIKE, OR HORSEBACK. REST UNDER THE MILKY WAY IN A TENT OR RV AS STARS SPARKLE AND SHINE. LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS OF CREEKS FLOWING, BIRDS SINGING, AND LEAVES RUSTLING. THESE 4,800 ACRES PROVIDE A HIDDEN OASIS FOR WILDLIFE, AND A LIBRARY OF STRIKING STORIES OF PAST AND PRESENT.



THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

During your time with us, please remember that everything here is protected. This includes all artifacts, historical structures, plants, and animals (even snakes). These were all here before us, play a part in this region’s history or ecosystem, and we want to preserve them for future generations. You can help by “taking only pictures and leaving only footprints.” This way you can enjoy all our recreational opportunities, such as hiking, horseback riding, fishing, or camping, and still conserve our natural and cultural resources. For more information, check with park headquarters or with park staff.

We hope you also take some time to visit these other state parks while visiting the Western Cross Timbers:

Lake Mineral Wells State Park & Trailway

(about 50-minute drive)

100 Park Rd. 71, Mineral Wells, 76067 • (940) 328-1171

Possum Kingdom State Park (about 1-hour drive)

3901 State Park Rd. 33, Caddo, 76429 • (940) 549-1803

Dinosaur Valley State Park (about 1 hour 15 minute-drive)

1629 Park Rd. 59, Glen Rose, 76043 • (254) 897-4588

Cleburne State Park (about 1 hour 30 minute-drive)

5800 Park Rd. 21, Cleburne, 76033 • (817) 645-4215

Visit [www.tpwd.texas.gov](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov) for more information on these and other Texas state parks and historic sites.

Palo Pinto Mountains State Park

1917 FM 2372, Strawn, Texas 76475 • (254) 672-5684

[tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/palo-pinto-mountains](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/palo-pinto-mountains)

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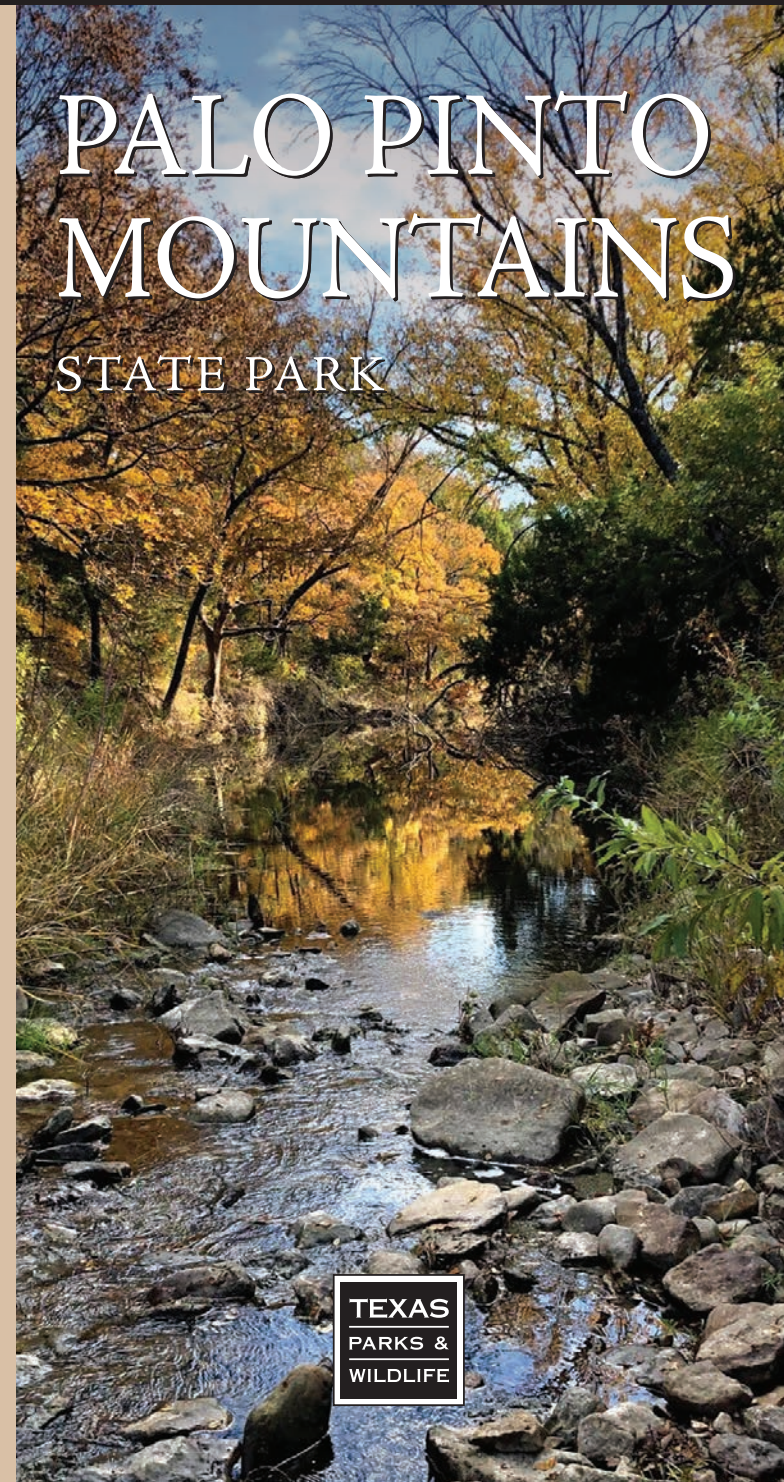
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PALO PINTO MOUNTAINS STATE PARK





## CREATION OF A “MOUNTAIN” RANGE

Steep slopes of limestone and sandstone form the rocky ridges of canyons, vistas, and creek beds of Palo Pinto Mountains State Park. Going back to the late Cretaceous period, this area was part of the inland sea that once split our continent in two. These waters laid the foundation for the land formations you see here today. Over time, erosion has created *cuestras* – geological formations with a gradual slope on one side and a steep slope on the other. While these are not true mountains, the terrain they create can resemble a mountain. This collection of large *cuestras* has created impressive hills called the Palo Pinto Mountain Range.

## LAND OF COLOR

This area was given the name “Palo Pinto” by Spanish explorers, though the reason why isn’t exactly known – roughly translated, Palo Pinto means “painted stick.” Now, this name is used to identify many aspects of the area – a nearby town, a mountain range, and a Texas state park!

Take a walk around the park and you’ll see juniper trees, with their year-round green foliage, blue colored, berry-like cones, and tinted red bark. The juniper trees



JIMMY SHIPP, TPWD



CHASE FOUNTAIN, TPWD

are not the only colorful thing out here, though. Come fall, the rolling hills are speckled with brilliant red, orange, and gold as red oak, flame-leaf sumac, hackberry, and cedar elm don their seasonal colors. Palo Pinto Creek and Russell Creek, along with their many tributaries, carve out canyons from white limestone and weave through the park, onward until they meet the Brazos River. Many colorful animals call this section of the Western Cross Timbers home such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, gray fox, red-tailed hawk, beaver, great blue heron, and a plethora of migrating songbirds with all the colors of the rainbow.



Golden-cheeked warbler. USFWS/Steve Maslowski

Among our colorful songbirds is the endangered golden-cheeked warbler which is attracted to the area by the juniper forests and rolling hills – very much like us!

## TALES OF GHOSTS

The construction of the railroad through Strawn brought an influx of workers and engineers with the promise of work. When coal, and later oil, were discovered in Palo Pinto County, the transport of supplies and goods via railroad increased to keep up with the demand of the industries. Settlements, such as Wiles and the Pierce Oil camp, popped up to accommodate workers and receive and house supplies. After the decline of oil, gas, and coal production, wells and mines were shut down. The settlements that once thrived, were abandoned leaving behind empty ghost towns. Remnants of these towns still exist here as eerie reminders of the past.

## PEOPLE COME AND GONE

Imagine a world before trains, roads, cars, and modern technology. Even then, there were people who loved this land. Indigenous people made their homes and raised their families in these hills, but their lives looked a bit different from what we might picture. They utilized local resources, such as mesquite, cochineal, and white-tailed deer, for medicine, food, clothes, tools, and shelter, making everything they needed by hand. To prepare their food they used stone-lined firepits in the ground. They often lived nomadic lives following game and other sources of food as the seasons changed.

When settlers moved westward into this area, they brought a more modern world with them. Ranching became a way of life, and two ranchers laid the foundation of what would one day become Strawn, Texas, just four miles east of the park. Stephen Bethel Strawn and James Nesbit Stuart played a major role in bringing the Texas and Pacific Railroad to Strawn which brought a significant economic boom to the town. Construction on the tracks began in 1880. These tracks are still functional and are found along the northern border of the park. Keep an eye (and an ear) out for the next train coming around the bend!

Railroad trestle reflection over the tranquil Palo Pinto Creek

