



Summer tanager

THE PARK'S NAMESAKE RIVER IS AN EVER-CHANGING SOURCE OF LIFE. FROM KINGFISHERS ABOVE AND BASS BELOW, SOUTH LLANO RIVER STATE PARK HOSTS AN ARRAY OF WILDLIFE AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE. FOUR BIRD BLINDS FOCUS ON FEATHERED FLYERS, AND ARMADILLOS SHUFFLE ABOUT THE RIVER BOTTOM. DURING THE WINTER, TURKEYS TAKE REFUGE IN A FOREST OF PECAN TREES. WHETHER YOU TAKE TO THE TRAILS ON A MOUNTAIN BIKE, CAMP IN YOUR RV, OR PADDLE A KAYAK DOWNRIVER, SOUTH LLANO RIVER HAS WILDNESS TO OFFER.



While you explore the river and hills that make this park unique, please remember that everything you see is protected. Artifacts, rocks, animals, and plants are all part of the region's rich natural and cultural heritage. Help us keep South Llano River a special place for everyone.

- ♦ Hike only on designated trails and stay out of closed areas.
- ♦ Leave no trace. Keep your park clean by picking up your trash.
- ♦ Safeguard the park for future generations and leave plants, artifacts, animals, and fossils where you find them.
- ♦ Help preserve the natural night by limiting outdoor lighting at your campsite.
- ♦ Join the Friends of South Llano River State Park, a nonprofit volunteer organization that supports the park.

South Llano River State Park  
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INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

# SOUTH LLANO RIVER STATE PARK



## THE RIVER THAT ALWAYS RUNS

What brought you to South Llano River State Park? If you came for the river, you're in good company. The South Llano River has attracted people for thousands of years. Native Americans first traveled through this area about 12,000 years ago. They used the clear river water for drinking and fished for dinner from its banks. Until the 1850s, the only people here were these indigenous people, who used the area's water, game, stones, and other natural resources to support their lives.

Early settlers of European descent established farms and ranches along the riverbanks and relied on the water for agriculture. In recorded history, the South Llano River has never run dry—it's a constant source of life. If you live in a place that gets drinking water from one of the Highland Lakes, you also rely on this river!

One animal that thrives in the crisp river water is the Guadalupe bass, the state fish of Texas. This special fish lives only in Texas waterways and needs clean, flowing water to survive. They're small, measuring around 10 to 12 inches (25-30cm), but this doesn't mean they're easy to catch! Guadalupe bass are known for putting up a fight and challenging even experienced anglers. Thanks to careful management and stocking from Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Guadalupe bass population in the South Llano River is healthy, making this park one of the best places to see them.

Guadalupe bass



FRESTON BEAN, TPWD



## BRIGHT STARS

The night sky is more than a source of wonder and delight—it's also a vital part of the lives of wildlife. Animals, including humans, evolved to a cycle of light and dark. The dark, natural night signals for nocturnal animals to start their day, and for us diurnal animals to settle in for sleep. In places with a lot of artificial light, like cities, these signals get interrupted.

South Llano River State Park is recognized as an International Dark Sky Park, a prestigious recognition for places that not only have an amazing view of the stars but also educate the public about why our dark skies and natural night are important. While you're here, attend a nighttime interpretive program or just take a moment to gaze up at the stars on your own. You're sure to enjoy the view.

## THE GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER

This small endangered bird is totally Texan! Each spring, golden-cheeked warblers arrive in the Hill Country from warmer climates in Central America.

They flit about oak and juniper woodlands to find a mate and raise their young. Golden-cheeked warblers use the stringy bark of Ashe juniper, or cedar, trees to build their nest. Without these trees, the warblers would have no place to lay their eggs! You're most likely to see or hear them on the backcountry trails between March and June. Listen for their singsong trill with a slight buzz at the end. In the summer, they migrate back south, only to start the whole process over again in a few months.



## STEWARDS OF THE LAND

One of these early landowners here was Walter White Buck, a retired jeweler who bought property in 1910 along the river, hoping to find a drier climate for his ill son, Stroud. The Bucks enlarged an old farmhouse, which is now the park headquarters. They raised sheep and goats, and also cultivated the pecan trees in the river bottom. When Walter died in 1932, his son Walter Jr. took over the ranch. He continued to raise goats and cattle, and also opened his property for hunting. It's this legacy we still see today.

In 1977, Walter Jr. donated more than two thousand acres to the state for wildlife conservation and park recreation. Much of the ranch land was a wildlife management area until 2011, and today, public hunts are still part of how the park manages wildlife here.

