



DISCOVER A QUIET RETREAT AMONG SPANISH MOSS-DRAPED CYPRESS AND TOWERING PINES. HERE, ALONG THE BANK OF BIG CYPRESS BAYOU, YOU WILL FIND THE 484-ACRE CADDO LAKE STATE PARK. THE ENDURING CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE RUSTIC STONE AND WOOD CABINS CONSTRUCTED IN THE 1930S BY THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS EVOKES A SENSE OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY. CADDO LAKE IS A REFUGE FROM THE 21ST CENTURY, A PLACE TO ENJOY RECREATIONAL AND INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND ESCAPE THE RUSH OF MODERN LIFE.



Cabins were designed to incorporate natural materials from the surrounding landscape. Still in use today, they are a testament to CCC skill and craftsmanship.

### THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

While enjoying this natural beauty, please remember that everything you see in the park is protected. Artifacts, rocks, plants and animals (even snakes) are all part of the region's rich natural and cultural heritage. Help us keep park recreational use sustainable for the future and protect these resources by leaving things as you find them.

### FURTHER READING

- Caddo Was... A short history of Caddo Lake* by Fred Dahmer (1989)
- Parks for Texas* by James Wright Steely (1999)
- Every Sun That Rises* by Wyatt Moore (1985)

We hope you will visit these CCC-developed parks and other state parks while visiting East Texas:

- Bonham State Park • Bonham, Texas • (903) 583-5022
- Daingerfield State Park • Daingerfield, Texas • (903) 645-2921
- Tyler State Park • Tyler, Texas • (903) 597-5338



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## INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

# CADDO LAKE STATE PARK







## THE GREAT RAFT: AN ORIGIN STORY

Earthquakes! Meteors! Massive floods! Don't worry, you haven't stumbled upon an end-of-times story. These are a few of the theories behind the formation of Caddo Lake, the largest naturally formed lake in Texas. However, the scientific community and historians agree that the formation of Caddo Lake began with a natural phenomenon not mentioned above — a giant log jam along the Red River known as the Great Raft.

Largely composed of cottonwood logs and branches mixed in with oak, ash, willow, sweet gum, and cedar, the raft maintained a fairly consistent distance of 80 river miles, snaking its way upriver at just under a mile per year. The denseness of the raft created a natural dam on the river, allowing very little water flow. As the hydrologic force of spring floodwaters met with the impenetrable mass of logs, breaks occurred in the natural levee of the river forming large distributaries. These distributaries created an ever-changing series of raft lakes along the borders of the Red River. One such distributary poured into the Cypress River Basin creating Caddo Lake.

Of the numerous raft lakes formed by the Great Raft, Caddo Lake is the only lake to have maintained

From Edward King's manuscript, *The Southern States of North America: a record of journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland.*

continuous existence from the raft period to today. Its presence in modern times is owed to a man-made dam in Mooringsport, Louisiana. This gives Caddo Lake the distinction of being created by nature but controlled by man.



The Caddo hunted wild game with bows and arrows, fished, and farmed corn, beans and squash.

## SEASONS OF CHANGE

On a lush spring morning, a Caddo man crouches next to the sleepy bayou and silently surveys the awakening world around him. He inhales the sweet scent of blossoming dogwoods and whistles along with the prothonotary warbler. After a bitter winter, spring breathes life back into the forested floodplain. White-tailed deer munch on unfurling leaves, turtles crowd floating logs, and soon the planting of corn and squash will begin. Rising, he places a woven basket trap in the murky water; his family will enjoy freshly caught crappie as their evening meal.



Prothonotary Warbler

On a dewy summer day, a woman sits onboard a steamboat as she travels with her husband to newly established Port Caddo. A green darner dragonfly rests lazily on the brim of her straw hat, as even the insects are lulled by the unforgiving heat. As the steamboat chugs through a bald cypress-lined canal, she observes a shimmering broad-banded water snake sunbathing on a low limb. She smiles as she imagines her future in this wild oasis.

On a crisp fall afternoon, a loud tap-tap-tap rings through the air. Believing the sound to be construction of the pine Recreation Hall nearby, a young Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee is startled when he spots a pileated woodpecker searching for food. He realizes the area's towering loblolly pines are valuable to both bird and man. He is proud of the back-breaking work his company has put into this project. Soon, the state park they've built will open to the public, complete with cabins, a pavilion, and breathtaking views of Caddo Lake.

On a frigid winter day, a park visitor gathers her children by a canoe and takes extra care to button their coats before snapping on their life jackets. Today, she will show them beauty can be found in nature, no matter the season. As they glide past the fishing pier and into the Spanish moss sanctuary of Saw Mill Pond, she feels a strong connection to her children and the natural world around her. Hearing small murmurs of excitement coming from the other end of the canoe, she knows their memories of this moment will last a lifetime. What memories will you create with your family?

Saw Mill Pond

