

*Interpretive Guide to:*

# MARTIN CREEK LAKE

STATE PARK



WELCOME TO MARTIN CREEK LAKE STATE PARK, A PEACEFUL HAVEN AMONG THE PINES. ANGLERS YOUNG AND OLD SEEK THE NEXT BIG ONE IN THE LAKE, AND SHADED CAMPSITES AND TRAILS OFFER REFUGE TO VISITORS. KICK BACK AND RELAX WHILE YOU'RE HERE.



## 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 cultural and natural heritage. Help us keep recreational use sustainable for the future and protect these resources by leaving things as you find them.

We hope you will visit these other state parks while visiting East Texas:

Caddo Lake State Park  
245 Park Road 2  
Karnack, Texas 75661  
(903) 679-3351

Tyler State Park  
789 Park Road 16  
Tyler, Texas 75706  
(903) 597-5338

Daingerfield State Park  
455 Park Road 17  
Daingerfield, Texas 75638  
(903) 645-2921

Purtis Creek State Park  
14225 FM 316  
Eustace, Texas 75124  
(903) 425-2332

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



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# TRAILS THROUGH TIME

For thousands of years, people have survived and thrived in what is now East Texas.

The land first provided food, water, and shelter to groups of Native Americans who moved from place to place, usually following the seasons or food. Caddo Indians eventually created permanent villages along waterways in this area. They grew crops like corn, beans, and squash, and cultivated a complex society. The Caddo were well known among tribes in the South, maintaining far-reaching trade routes.

Anglo settlers moved into this part of Texas in the early 19th century, displacing the Caddo. Martin Creek Lake bears the name of one of the first Anglo settlers, Daniel Martin, who settled nearby with his family in 1833.

These settlers transformed a narrow Indian trail into Trammel's Trace, a wagon road that wound its way from Texas to Arkansas. Trammel's Trace brought more people here, as did the Henderson-to-Shreveport Road. With the establishment of the town of Harmony Hill, this area became a natural rest stop for travelers.



The Caddo established permanent villages in the area.

On the eve of the Civil War, Harmony Hill was a small but bustling stop on the road to Shreveport. Travelers and residents shopped at a handful of stores and attended one of several churches. Just like the Caddo, many settlers relied on agriculture. Cotton gins and grist mills served the town, along with a small furniture factory and a blacksmith shop.



Railroads brought prosperity to many towns in Texas, but not Harmony Hill. When the railroad bypassed the village in favor of nearby Tatum, Harmony Hill faced a sharp decline. By 1900, just a few families still lived here.

All that remains of early settlements are a few trails that criss-cross the woods of Martin Creek Lake State Park. Some of the park's hiking trails use these historic routes, too. When you hit the trails, you are sharing the paths with the generations that walked before you.

Tatum, Texas railroad depot



First Railroad Depot, Tatum, Texas 1885 to 1911  
Given By Mrs. W.M. "Back" Kemby

# WOODS AND WATER

The warm waters of Martin Creek Lake are well known for fishing, with a healthy largemouth bass population that spawns two months earlier than those in nearby lakes. Catfish are another popular game fish here, and many younger anglers have good luck catching sunfish, too.

Like many people, birds are also seeking their next meal in the water. Look for shorebirds like great blue herons, green herons, and great egrets standing still, peering intently into the lake. When they spot a fish, their long beak acts like a spear, darting through the water.

Blotched water snakes, diamondback water snakes, and cottonmouths are common in and around the lake. These water-loving reptiles mostly eat small fish and frogs.

Beyond the lakeshore, many more animals make their home in the lush pine forest. Loblolly and shortleaf pine trees make good homes and provide a buffet of bugs for woodpeckers and raccoons. On the forest floor, look for nine-banded armadillos, white-tailed deer, and swamp rabbits moving about the undergrowth.

In the fall, the forest offers a colorful show of fall foliage. Hardwoods, like water oak and blackgum that live along the lakeshore and drainages, change their colors with a flourish.

