

The area is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A Superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 7408, Beaumont, TX 77706, is in immediate charge of the preserve. Call 713/838-0271, ext. 373.

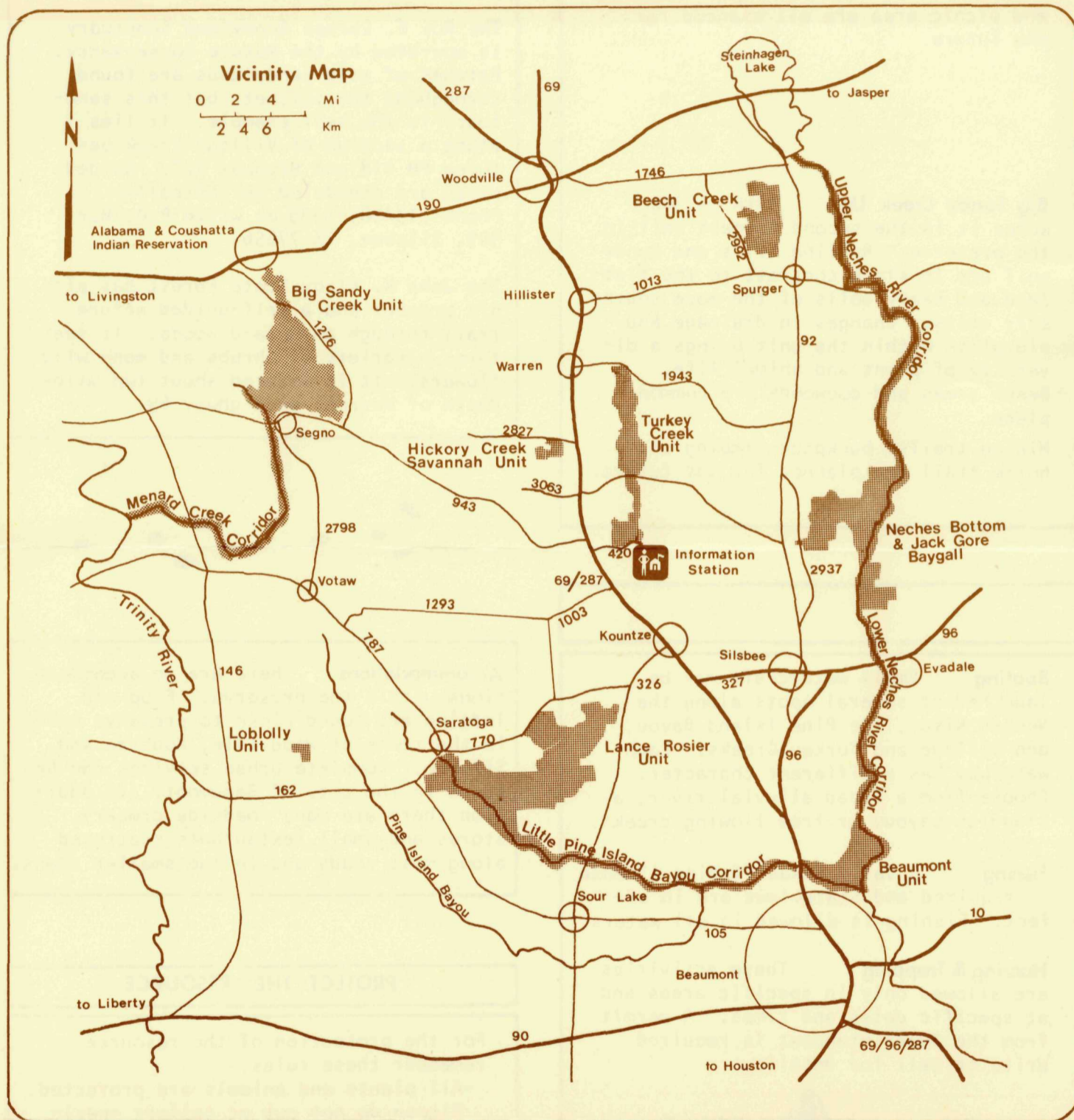
As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, park and recreation areas, and for the wise use of all resources.



10/80



Big Thicket National Preserve



DEVELOPED UNITS

The preserve consists of 12 units of various sizes spread over a 50 mile square. There are 8 land units and 4 river or stream corridors. Hiking trails are planned for all of the land units in the future. Units will remain closed to visitors until they can be adequately managed.

Three units have developments and are open to visitors; the Turkey Creek, Beech Creek, and Hickory Creek Savannah Units. Other units will open as development allows. Check at the information station for current information.



Turkey Creek Unit This 7,800 acre unit contains the greatest concentration of plant diversity in the preserve.

A nine mile north-south trail extends through the northern half of this unit. A trail map is available at trailheads.

A visitor information station is located at the south end of the unit, on FM 420, 2½ miles east of Highway 69

A nature trail located behind the information station features a large variety of plants and various views of the creek and its floodplain community.

Beech Creek Unit This 4,856 acre unit had an excellent beech-magnolia-loblolly plant community. During the years 1975 to 1976 an epidemic of southern pine beetles occurred. Almost all of the loblolly pines were killed. It will be interesting to watch changes in forest and animal populations following such a disturbance.

A short loop trail through a mature portion of the remaining hardwoods is open to visitors.

Hickory Creek Savannah Unit is recognized by its open long-leaf pine forest and wetlands. The dry sandy soil of the uplands and its wetter lowland soils give rise to a multitude of flowers and grasses. Under natural conditions the area resembles a glade-like park when exposed to natural grassland wildfires. The absence of fire allows the shrubs to invade and become dense thickets.

A 1 mile hiking trail loops through the eastern part of this small 668 acre unit.

Trying to visit the preserve may be rather difficult because of the many separate units and the lack of signing and development. Since land acquisition is still incomplete, only a few visitor facilities exist within the preserve. All land adjoining the preserve units is privately owned. Some tracts of land within authorized preserve boundaries are also still private. Use of closed units and land adjacent to the preserve can have serious consequences. If in doubt, don't trespass.

CORRIDOR UNITS

Four waterway corridors add to the natural, scenic and recreational values of the preserve.

Little Pine Island Bayou Corridor connects Lance Rosier Unit to the Beaumont Unit.

Menard Creek Corridor south and west of the Big Sandy Unit, connects to the Trinity River.

Neches River Corridors include all of the river from Dam B south to Beaumont.

Canoeing and fishing are popular activities on portions of these units. All of the corridors have water access points planned, although one can put in at almost any road crossing. Boat ramps already exist along the Neches River and parts of the Pine Island Bayou.



A DEVELOPING AREA

Big Thicket National Preserve was established on October 11, 1974. The Act authorized 84,550 acres of disjoint units and stream corridors in seven Texas Counties. The preserve is still in the land acquisition phase and only those units which have been purchased and have developments are open to visitors. Development will proceed gradually as ownership is acquired and funds and manpower allow.

FIRST OF ITS KIND

The Big Thicket region of Southeast Texas is special because of the wide variety of plants and animals found here. This biological diversity caused Congress to set aside portions for present and future generations to enjoy. Located in the midst of vast energy resources, the land could not be managed as a typical park. The preserve concept protects the resources, but allows controlled extraction of minerals and others uses not normally permitted in the National Park System.

UNDEVELOPED UNITS

Although the following units are not yet developed, you may find it interesting to drive by and observe certain features.

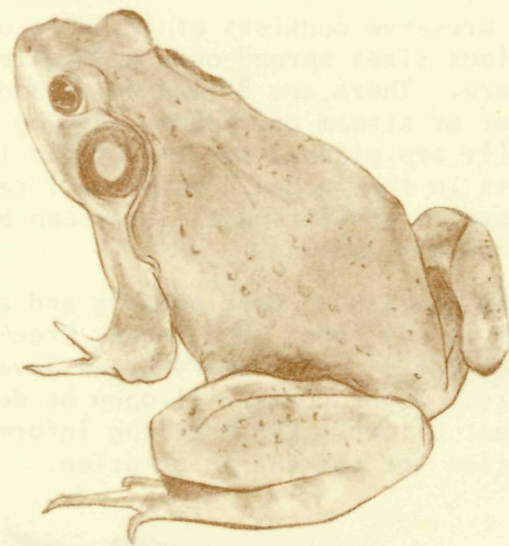


Lance Rosier Unit This 25,024 acre area is the largest unit. Topographically it is the most uniform. It is situated on the most recent of geological formations, and consequently drainage is poor. A mosaic of thick vegetation exists which contrasts to the northern units where vegetation bands are larger and better defined. The unit is steeped in history. One of the first oil wells in Texas was driven near Saratoga in the mid 1860's. A private museum in Saratoga reveals some of the area's human and natural history. Hiking trails and some type of road access to points of interest are planned for the future.

Loblolly Unit This 550 acre area is the smallest unit. It contains a well-developed pine hardwood forest at the north end, and a largely loblolly pine forest at the south end. Flat land, with heavy, poorly drained soil, causes wet conditions through much of the year.

Beaumont Unit This 6,218 acre area is the wettest of our land units with elevations between 5-10 feet. It is subject to salt water intrusion and periodic flooding which gives rise to a great variety of aquatic life. It is almost surrounded by water and is for practical purposes an island.

Boat access, a canoe trail, a hiking trail and picnic area are planned for the future.



Neches Bottom & Jack Gore Baygall Unit

This 13,300 acre unit offers contrasting environments of beech-magnolia bluffs and hummocks, acidbog baygalls, cypress tupelo sloughs, floodplain hardwood forests and abandoned channel lakes along the Neches River.

The eastern and western boundaries of this unit contain bluffs of the ancient Neches River floodplain or "alluvium." The ancient Neches River filled this valley during a period of high sea level. The meandering river left abandoned channels. Those channels receiving water from seepage become baygalls, while others become "pin-oak flats" woods.

Hiking trails, road for river access, and picnic area are all planned for the future.

Big Sandy Creek Unit With 14,300 acres it is the second largest unit in the preserve. Rolling hills and sandy soil are in stark contrast to the flatland and heavy soils of the more southerly units. Changes in drainage and elevation within the unit brings a diversity of plant and animal life. Beech trees and dogwoods are commonplace.

Hiking trails, backpack camping and a horse trail are planned for the future.

Activities Outside the Preserve

The Big Thicket Association, a non-profit private organization, operates a museum in the town of Saratoga. The museum introduces Big Thicket natural and cultural history and legends of the area. Interpretation includes a slide show, plant displays, dioramas, specimen collections, maps and photographs. The museum is open daily except Mondays. Phone: 713/274-5000 or write P.O. Box 198, Saratoga, TX 77585.

The Alabama Coushatta Indian Reservation, located on Highway 190 at the north end of the Big Sandy Creek Unit, is open most of the year (closed Jan. & Feb.). They provide demonstrations and exhibits of their crafts and culture and operate a modern campground facility.

The Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary is operated by the Nature Conservancy. Patches of arid sandylands are found throughout the thicket, but this sanctuary is the best example. It lies along a section of Village Creek between FM 418 and Highway 327. Guided hikes are scheduled periodically. Phone 713/385-4135 or write P.O. Box 909, Silsbee, TX 77656.

The John K. Kirby State Forest has picnic grounds and a self-guided nature trail through an upland woods. It features a variety of shrubs and many wild flowers. It is located about two miles south of Warren, on Highway 69.

ENJOYING THE PRESERVE

Interpretive Program An information station is provided at the south end of the Turkey Creek Unit, on FM 420, 2½ miles east of Highway 69. It is open daily from spring through fall; closed Tues./Wed. in winter.

Naturalist guided walks and other programs are scheduled throughout the year. Check at area bulletin boards or at the information station for details.

Nature Study The preserve contains great diversity of plant and animal life, which makes for an ideal outdoor nature laboratory. All that is needed is time to observe. Go slowly, look, listen, enjoy.

Birding is a favorite sport, especially during spring and fall migrations. During late March to early May hundreds of bird species pass through, bound for their northern nesting areas.



Photography Hundreds of colorful flowers, fungi and insects make the area a photographer's paradise. Most subjects are found in deep shade. Use an adjustable camera with high speed film and a tripod. This will allow better depth of field and shutter speed control.

Camping Primitive backpack camping is allowed by permit in certain parts of the preserve. No developed campgrounds are planned. Several private and public campgrounds in the vicinity offer tent and recreational vehicle facilities.



Hiking the Trails Trails are planned for all of the units except river corridors. Hiking trails exist in three units. You can choose between short trails of about 1 mile, or longer ones up to 9 miles. These trails lead through a variety of environments providing glimpses of the diversity which makes up the preserve. Rain occurs frequently so be prepared to encounter standing or running water on the trails. When stream flooding occurs do not attempt to follow a submerged trail. You could step into a deep waterhole. No permits are required to hike, but do register at the trailhead.

For your safety and the preservation of the natural environment, *pets and vehicles are not permitted on any trails.* Carry out what you carried in. Stay on the trails as it is easy to become lost.

Boating Small watercraft may be launched at several spots along the Neches River, the Pine Island Bayou, and Village and Turkey Creeks. Each waterway has a different character. Choose from a broad alluvial river, a sluggish bayou, or free flowing creeks.

Fishing A valid Texas fishing license is required and State laws are in effect. Fishing is allowed in all waters.

Hunting & Trapping These activities are allowed only in specific areas and at specific dates and times. A permit from the Superintendent is required. Write or call for details.



Weather Words Rain, heat and humidity are important parts of the "Thicket" experience. It can, and usually does, rain during every month of the year. About 55 inches fall annually and are spread fairly evenly through the year. Summer daytime temperatures of mid-80's to mid-90's combined with showers produce a very humid climate. Daytime winter temperatures average mid-50's, and days are often overcast.

Accommodations There are no accommodations within the preserve. Food and lodging are found close to preserve units in the towns of Woodville, Kountze and Silsbee. Complete urban services can be found in the city of Beaumont. In addition there are many roadside grocery stores and small restaurants scattered along most roads and in the smaller towns.

PROTECT THE RESOURCE

For the protection of the resource remember these rules.

- All plants and animals are protected. Please do not cut or collect specimens.
- Pack out what you pack in. Don't leave an eyesore.
- Camping, fires, vehicles and pets are not allowed in the backcountry.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- Have a safe trip, remember these tips.
- Register at the trailhead.
 - Stay on the trail.
 - Detour around snakes--some are poisonous. Don't kill any of them.
 - Use insect repellent for comfort.
 - Take plenty of water. Do not drink from creeks or ponds.
 - Avoid disturbing bee, wasp, or fire ant nests.