

STEWARDSHIP OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK



Undeveloped land such as Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area are becoming increasingly rare. Rapid development continues to destroy and fragment habitat in the surrounding area. Changes in recreation patterns and increased numbers of visitors have placed these precious resources at risk.

An important step toward ensuring the future of this site is to appreciate and gain a better understanding of it. We encourage you as a visitor and user of this sensitive area to join us in this effort.

- ✦ Attend and take advantage of interpretive programs offered in the park, including the guided tour of Honey Creek and Saturday evening amphitheater programs.
- ✦ Protect the natural and historical resources of the area by staying out of closed areas.
- ✦ Learn more about German settlement and land management as well as natural resources in the Texas Hill Country.
- ✦ Stay on designated trails to further reduce impacts.
- ✦ Help keep the area clean by not littering, and take nothing but photographs when you leave.
- ✦ Become a volunteer, join the Friends of Guadalupe River State Park and Honey Creek State Natural Area, or help by making a monetary donation.

Guadalupe River SP and Honey Creek SNA
3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, TX 78070
(830) 438-2656 • www.tpwd.state.tx.us/guadalupe/river/

Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek, Inc.
www.honeycreekfriends.com



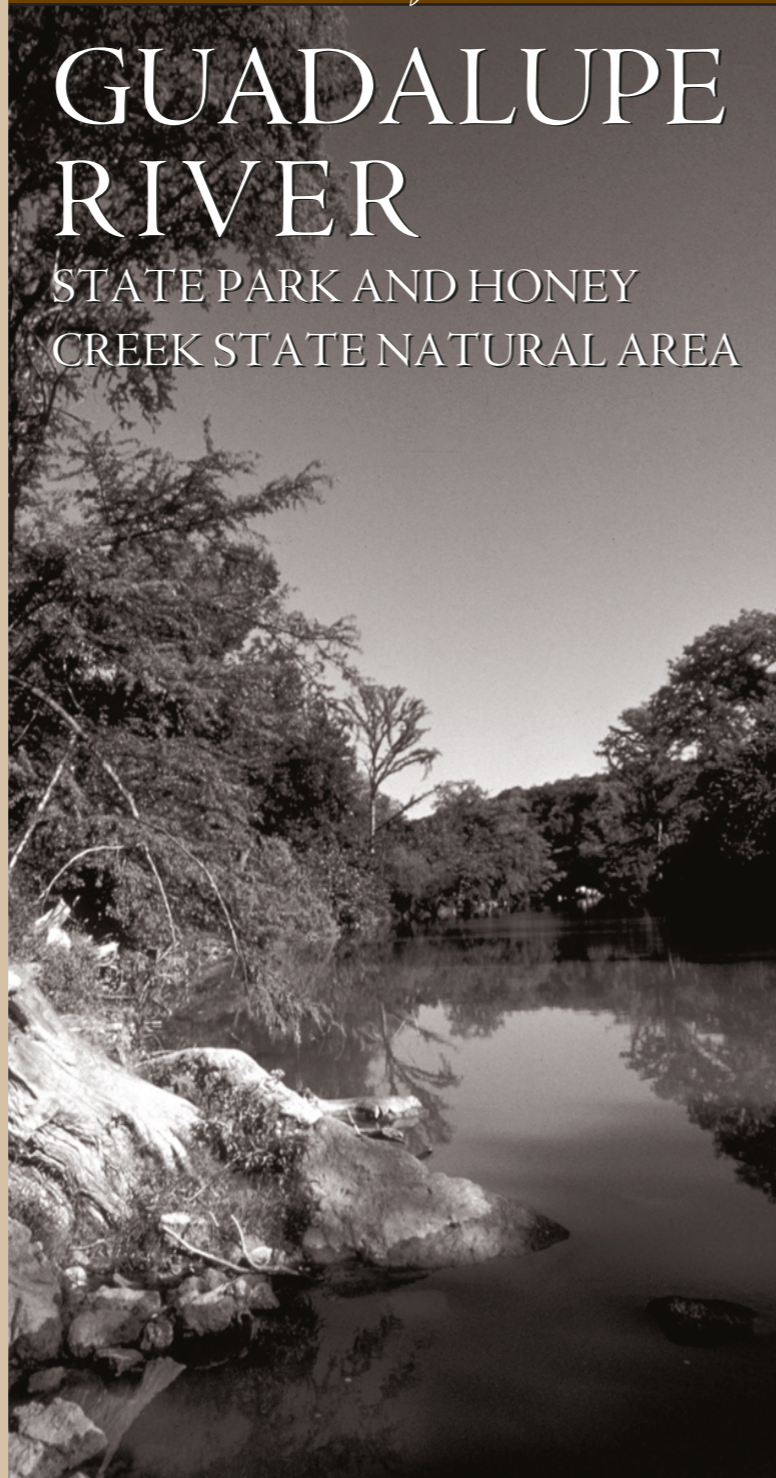
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Interpretive Guide to:

GUADALUPE RIVER

STATE PARK AND HONEY CREEK STATE NATURAL AREA



CREAMY LIMESTONE CLIFFS AND TOWERING CYPRESS TREES GRIP THE BANKS OF A SEEMINGLY LAZY AND DOCILE RIVER TO CREATE THE FOCAL POINT OF GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK. THIS IDYLIC SETTING IS THE ONLY DEVELOPED PUBLIC ACCESS POINT TO THE UPPER GUADALUPE, ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC RIVER SECTIONS IN TEXAS. YET THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK THAN THE BEAUTIFUL RIVER. LEAVE THE CROWDS BEHIND AND DISCOVER OTHER WONDERS OF THIS BEAUTIFUL PARK.

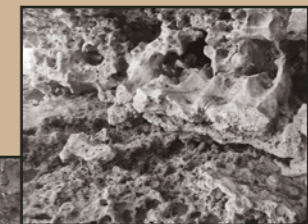


BEYOND THE RIVER

Explore one of the many trails at the park to discover its dramatic scenery. Exposed geology is an often unnoticed treasure and hides a secret we all must appreciate. Over eons, slightly acidic water literally dissolves the prominent limestone to form a rugged appearance reminiscent of a wild country from a forgotten past.

The true treasure of the geology, however, is not its appearance but rather, what it holds underground. A close look at the exposed limestone reveals honeycombed features that capture rainfall, allowing it to drain and infiltrate underground, ultimately recharging the Edwards and Trinity aquifers. This topography, known as karst, provides the lifeblood necessary for all who live within its corridors – fresh water.

Yet this landscape continues to disappear at alarming rates as developmental sprawl expands from the surrounding urban centers. What we put into the ground ultimately comes back out; therefore, we must be cautious with pollutants and other chemicals. Karst landscapes are a secret we all must appreciate.



Karst geology allows rainfall to infiltrate the surface and percolate into the aquifer.



HONEY CREEK SNA

Take a guided tour to Honey Creek and be rewarded with a breathtaking journey. The creek is in Honey Creek State Natural Area, which adjoins the park. This fragile area has been set aside to protect the pristine creek habitat. Ancient oaks laden with wisps of Spanish moss and centuries-old cypress trees join pecan, walnut, cedar elm and Texas oak to form a forest canopy. Below is a lush understory of dwarf palmettos, switchgrass, maidenhair ferns and columbine.

Protection, education, research, and the encouragement of thoughtful appreciation are all primary purposes of this site. Old-growth Ashe juniper trees provide habitat for the endangered golden-cheeked warbler. The riparian area and water resources host several other rare and threatened species. Restoration efforts have increased stands of native grasses. In collaboration with other agencies and universities, research projects are revealing relationships between habitat improvement, spring flow and water quality.

As a State Natural Area, activities at Honey Creek are limited to those that have minimal impact to the site and promote thoughtful understanding. Access to the site is limited to guided tours.



"The mountains are cedar bedecked, the valleys contain delightful prairies with occasional groves of trees of ten or twelve varieties of oaks."

C. Hugo Claus (c. 1875), description of the Cibolo and Guadalupe River Valley

KNOWING THE PAST HELPS US PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The fresh, clean, cool waters of the Guadalupe River have been the life force for the plants animals and humans using this area for over 12,000 years. Prehistoric people walked the river's edge you are walking now. They saw the same cliffs and likely enjoyed the river and its natural beauty as they hunted, fished, gathered and processed plant resources.

Spanish explorers discovered these wonders in the early 1700s, but it was over 100 years before European immigrants, mostly German, began to settle here. Their journals and letters described vast prairies, wildfires and migrating bison herds. These grasslands appeared to be an endless supply of food for domestic livestock. But the suppression of fire, fragmentation by fencing, and overgrazing by increasing numbers of cows and goats, decimated the very resource that had attracted the settlers. As a result, native Ashe juniper woodlands (cedar) became the dominant habitat.

Recognizing how past cultures used the land, and the results that followed, can help us develop preservation plans for future sustainability. Every visitor – past, present or future – leaves a mark on the face of the resource that is Guadalupe River State Park.

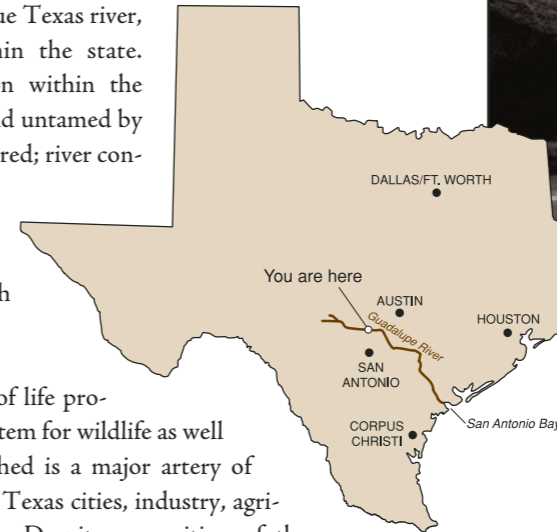
RESPECTING THE RIVER

The Guadalupe is a true Texas river, flowing entirely within the state. The four-mile portion within the park is wild, rugged and untamed by dams. Respect is required; river conditions can change instantly since the river flows free and is subject to intense flash flooding.

The river is a ribbon of life providing a healthy ecosystem for wildlife as well as people. Its watershed is a major artery of fresh water for central Texas cities, industry, agriculture and recreation. Despite recognition of the river's water quality and scenery, overuse threatens its flow. In 2002 the national nonprofit conservation organization American Rivers ranked the Guadalupe River as one of the top 10 most endangered rivers in the United States. Please demonstrate respect for this precious Texas resource through safe and responsible use of the river.

The Nature of the Guadalupe

One of the most compelling attributes of the park is its ecological diversity. The drive from the park headquarters to the river exposes wide-ranging habitats. Initially, moving through uplands of classic



Untamed by dams, the river is subject to flash flooding, which can reach above the cliff tops.



Texas Hill Country, notice the open grasslands scattered with oak mottes. Closer inspection reveals many species of grasses and wildflowers. Stands of thick Ashe juniper become dominant on steep rock slopes and valleys of the park, providing welcome shade to hikers and campers. Humidity increases near the river. This riparian habitat, where water meets land, is home to the highest concentration of wildlife.

The diverse plant life provides habitat to many invertebrates, fish and mammals, as well as over 160 species of birds that call this park home. Rare and endangered species survive at the park, including the Cagle's map turtle, Guadalupe bass, golden-cheeked warbler, and the Comal blind salamander. The diverse mammal populations provide excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing. The nature of Guadalupe awaits your discovery and appreciation.

TPWD selectively thinned Ashe juniper (cedar) woodlands to restore and balance similar natural conditions prior to European settlement 200 years ago. Prescribed fire now maintains this community.

