

Guadalupe River South Trail

A self-guided walking tour created by

T E X A S



This trail was developed and is maintained in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Texas Master Naturalists' Lindheimer Chapter.

Special features, trees, grasses, etc. are identified by cedar posts along the trail. The posts are numbered and correspond to this brochure.

Eagle Scout Projects

Eric Barnes: Bridge construction
Jed Bees: Benches at the amphitheater
Jay Marrou: Numbered cedar posts
Thomas Young: Bridge construction

Plant images courtesy

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department



The Guadalupe River South Trail

The Guadalupe River South Trail is a natural habitat of native plants and wildlife. The diversity of the area from the live oak savanna to the sparkling Guadalupe River (which is fed here from the chilly depths of Canyon Lake) has supported human habitation for several thousand years. The steady flow from Hill Country springs upstream of Canyon Dam and its natural watershed have made it an attractive source of water for humans and animals, creating the perfect setting for this nature trail.

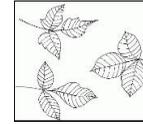
The Guadalupe River South Trail begins as you step down from the grassy prairie to the riparian zone. Riparian zones are what streamside habitats are called. They are extremely important sources of food and shelter for wildlife. Local resident species, as well as migrating species use riparian habitats for shelter or travel corridors. The uphill edge of a riparian zone is often higher in plant and animal diversity because species common in both the riparian zone and the upland habitat are both present. This is called the edge effect.

Take time to listen to the sounds of nature, watch carefully for wildlife, feel the noticeable drop in temperature, the texture of the leaves and bark; smell the pleasant and unusual odors as you walk. Enjoy the majesty and serenity of this nature trail.

Our History

Construction of the Guadalupe River South Trail began in 1995 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with 200 volunteers participating in a Public Lands Appreciation Day event and continued with community service restitution workers over the next few years.

In 2000, the Lindheimer Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists began its volunteer work on the trail and has since dedicated hundreds of hours maintaining the trail and lengthening it to 1.5 miles.



Caution – Poison Ivy

Despite efforts to control it, poison ivy is common along the river trail. Stay on the trail to avoid contact and learn to identify it. Poison ivy can grow like a ground cover, a vine or even a shrub. If you do contact it, be careful what you touch and wash with soap as soon as possible to avoid problems.

- 1. Live Oak Savanna:** The Texas Hill Country once had many open savannas with clusters of live oaks, cedar elms, and other trees. Clump grasses and wildflowers filled the areas in between. Fire suppression and over grazing by deer and livestock resulted in abundant ash junipers and fewer woody plants like black cherry, snowbells, crabapple, red oak and redbud tree. Notice the cedar elms mixed with the riparian trees like pecan. Rabbits are an example of a species that prefers living at the edge.
- 2. Bridge:** The flood of 2002 created a whirlpool. Notice the root exposure; concrete and brick debris were carried here by the force of the water. Watch for Texas spiny lizards.
- 3. Triple Trunk Hackberry Tree:** The unusually knobby bark of the hackberry makes it easy to identify. Although landscapers do not favor hackberry trees, many species of wildlife feed on the leaves and fruit, or nest in the cavities of older trees.
- 4. Mustang Grape Vines:** Notice the thickness of some of these old grape vines. Grape leaves are forage for deer and the fruit are important food for many wildlife species. The grapes ripen in July and make great jelly.
- 5. Bench:** This is a nice spot to sit, relax, observe birds feeding in the red mulberry trees and listen to the sound of the water and bird songs.

6. Virginia Creeper: It is a fast growing vine that provides ground cover and good fall color. Notice Virginia creeper's five leaflets. Poison ivy has three.

7. Guadalupe River: This location provides the first good view of the river. Notice the plants adapted specifically to grow at the water's edge like sedges, bald cypress and sycamore trees. In late summer an unpleasant odor may be present. It is due to anaerobic (without oxygen) decomposition in the deep water behind the dam. The odor decreases downstream as the river flow mixes in oxygen.

NOTE: The interrupting sound of a siren indicates that the water level may be altered and a detour up the hill may be necessary.

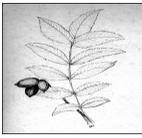
8. Inland Sea Oats: Also called Indian wood oats, this grass makes an attractive understory plant in a shaded area.

9. Meditation Point: A grand view of the swift, clear river and the natural rock outcropping make this a wonderful resting point to listen, watch, feel and smell the surroundings. These riparian zones are important greenbelts for people as well as wildlife.

10. Majestic Live Oak: Look up in the canopy of the live oak tree and see the air plant called ball moss. Ball moss anchors to the tree (not harming it) and gets its nutrients from the air. Look back at the front of the bridge on the river side, note the numerous woodpecker holes in the tree. Glance around for spider webs and their patterns that sometimes can be found on the underside of the bridge railing.

11. Ashe Juniper Stand: Also called mountain cedar, ashe juniper provides an evergreen fragrance and nesting material for the golden cheek warblers. This area is a mixed zone between the riparian and savanna, demonstrating again the edge effect.

12. Pecan Tree: A fine example of our state tree is found here. The nuts of the native pecan are usually tiny but are loved by squirrels and blue jays. Pecan trees and squirrels have a special shared relationship. Mother Nature made squirrels absent minded and pecans delicious. Squirrels scavenge the nuts, hide them and forget them. The effects of this are noted in number 30.



13. Gradual Slope to River: This area offers an excellent view and access to the limestone shelves and troughs that may harbor fish of the Guadalupe River. Trout are stocked by Trout Unlimited and Texas Fisheries in December and January. It is one of the special spots in Texas where fishermen can enjoy fly fishing.

14. Soapberry Tree: An old homestead may have been located here. Soapberry trees were planted by home owners, as the non-edible berries were used by the Indians and settlers as a shampoo and for washing clothes. The tree has long, thin leaves and a red flower.



15. Split Mesquite: Providing a point of interest, this mesquite is a fast growing tree and even though quite large, may only be 30-40 years old. Possibly it split in a weak area due to wind damage. Its hard wood is good for carving and to impart a delicious flavor for barbecuing. Jelly can be made from its seed pods.



16. Major Drainage Area: Riparian shrubs and trees in this natural drainage area help prevent erosion during floods. The increased plant life slows the water flow, reducing erosion downstream. This drainage area channels the run off, preventing severe erosion in other areas and also offers an excellent hiding place for wildlife

17. Bald Cypress Trees: Growing naturally in or near water, the bald cypress lines the Guadalupe River Trail. Famous for its knees, which are thought to provide air to the roots or to serve as anchors. The bald cypress were around with the dinosaurs. Along the pathway notice the spice bush, a shrub or small tree which has bright red berries in August. The young elliptical leaves are soft as velvet.

18. Cypress Hollow: Standing trees with cavities like this cypress hollow provide a habitat for a multitude of wildlife. Many birds excavate the cavities and as the hollow changes, its occupants change too. These cavities attract insects, fungi and microorganisms which become the food for other wildlife.

19. Texas Persimmon: A persimmon is located on the river side of the trail near the large pecan tree. In early spring you might smell the tiny blossoms before you see them. The fragrance is sharply sweet. Even though the fruits have little edible flesh surrounding the pits, persimmons provide food for birds and deer. The pulp stains easily and was used to dye animal hides. Attractive, thin, smooth, pale, gray bark peels off to expose the white trunk. As the wood readily absorbs moisture, persimmon can be used for salt shakers.

20. Pecan Canopies: A canopy is defined as a covering. Looking forward you will see several large pecan trees in this area providing a lovely canopy to look up and enjoy.

21. Decomposing Logs: Especially useful to salamanders and frogs, these logs attract other types of wildlife that like a secretive, cool, moist nest. Eventually, nature's cycle will transform these logs to mulch and compost, returning nutrients to the soil. Notice the sawdust from the busy wood boring insects. Often shelf fungi grow on the side of the log.

22. Hackberry Snags: On the river side are some hackberry snags (standing dead trees), providing nesting and food opportunities for birds and critters

23. Mott: A mott is a cluster of trees, or often one tree with many sprouts from the same roots. Here is a mott of rough leaf dogwoods. Birds enjoy the white berries and deer browse dogwood leaves. Did you know that people once believed the bark made a wash to rid dogs of mange. As you walk up the slope on the river side next to the trail, there is a lovely, small coma tree. Understory trees such as the coma, possumhaw, beautyberry and dogwood offer shelter and add to the important layer effect of the riparian zone.



24. Observation Bench: See which plants you can identify. The plants in this riparian area include: wild petunia (blooms in July with a purple flower), frostweed (has a white flower and blooms in September to feed the Monarchs during fall migration) and the prolific Turk's cap (has a red flower shaped like a pointed cap).

25. Greenbrier: Look for the prickly vine forming tangles. It has large, heart shaped leaves and stout, sharp thorns with clusters of purple berries that deer browse and cotton tails enjoy.



26. Prairie Area: As you leave the riparian area and enter the prairie area, a variety of wildflowers will be in bloom depending on the season. There are many varieties such as: Mexican hat, false willow, horse-mint, prairie verbena and various grasses. The common sunflower is abundant. Did you know this flower's head follows the path of the sun throughout the day?

27. Ravine: The flood of 2002 formed this ravine. Without man's intervention this area is in the process of stabilization.

28. Edge Effect: Two environments, the riparian area and the prairie area, come together at this point providing a preferred habitat for many animals. The abundance of wildlife in these areas draws hunters and birdwatchers. The edge effect creates a greater variety of vegetation and availability of both food and shelter.

29. Stand of Mexican Buckeye: Mexican buckeye are attractive ornamental trees with pink blooms in the spring. The unusual seed pods have a hard shell, are triangular in shape and form in the fall.



30. Pecan Grove: Absent-minded squirrels could have contributed to the existence of this cluster of young pecan trees. Even though a pecan tree grows in the riparian zone, many young trees may not survive due to the demand for large quantities of water, sometimes over 50 gallons per tree per day. Pecan trees are susceptible to many insects, especially web worms. However, nature has provided a predator to the web worm, the paper nest wasp.

The Guadalupe River South Trail ends here. To exit you will have to return to marker number one. As you travel back along the trail notice the reverse perspective creates a new experience.

Thank you for visiting the Guadalupe River South Trail.

For more information or to inquire about volunteer opportunities, go to the [Comal AgriLife website: http://comal.agrilife.org](http://comal.agrilife.org) and select [Master Naturalist. Additional information on birds: http://www.birds.cornell.edu/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/) [plants: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/)