



Hiking & Birdwatching Information Sheet

The Big Sandy Trail Big Sandy Creek Unit of the Big Thicket Preserve

Trail Notes

The trailhead has picnic tables, trash receptacles, barbeque pits, and a restroom. It has a paved handicapped parking area.

The 18-mile round trip trail within the Big Sandy Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve is open for hiking, mountain biking or horseback riding. The trail crosses upland pine forests with gradual slopes covered with American beech, southern magnolia, and loblolly pine. It then travels into bottomland hardwoods within the floodplains of Simons Branch and Big Sandy Creek. Tree species include sweetgum, basket oak, hornbeam and holly. Look for bald cypress trees at the wetland located at the 2.5-mile mark on the trail. White-tailed Deer and Nine-banded Armadillo are the most frequently encountered mammals along the trail.

The habitats of the Big Thicket support a diversity of birds. Look for Greater Roadrunner, Red-headed and Pileated Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Wood Thrush. Look overhead for Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and Common Nighthawk. Nesting birds include Black and White, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, Pine, and Kentucky Warblers.

Look to the drainages for dragonflies such as Jade Clubtail, Cobra Clubtail, Cyrano Darner, and Flag-tailed Spinyleg. Butterflies observed along the trail include Tiger and Giant swallowtail, Cloudless Sulfur, Great Southern White and Little Wood Satyr.

So saddle up your horse or bike and take a ride into the depths of the Big Thicket. Backcountry primitive camping permits are required for overnight stays and can be obtained by calling 409-246-2337.

There are still many fallen trees from Hurricane Ike and evidence of controlled burning along Sunflower Road. Don't let this discourage you. Many units of foresters, some from outside Texas, have been working to get the trails back in shape.

Directions

From Polk County Courthouse (Intersection of Hwy 59 Business and Highway 190)

Go East 12 miles on Hwy 190 to FM 1276; Turn right (South); Drive 8.8 miles to Sunflower Road; Turn right (West); Drive 2.1 miles; Turn left at the Big Thicket Preserve sign.