

Natural Features

Vegetation: Big Bend Ranch State Park is located in the Trans-Pecos Vegetation Area (Hatch et al., 1990). The flora and fauna are represented by a rich assemblage of species because of the high diversity of life found in the northern Chihuahuan Desert. The natural plant communities at BBRSP can be grouped into four major types:

1. A riparian zone found near springs, along drainages and in the Rio Grande corridor.
2. Mixed desert scrub characterized by an abundance of creosote,

ocotillo, cacti and lechuguilla, a Chihuahuan Desert indicator species.

3. Desert grassland.

4. Open juniper woodland, occurring in only the highest elevations.

The mixed desert scrub is by far the most widespread of these communities. It has largely replaced the once dominant desert grasslands. The riparian corridors are of particular importance as areas of high biological diversity.



Park Wildlife

The fauna of Big Bend Ranch State Park is also varied, particularly the mammalian and herpetofaunas. Forty-eight species of mammals have been documented from the park,

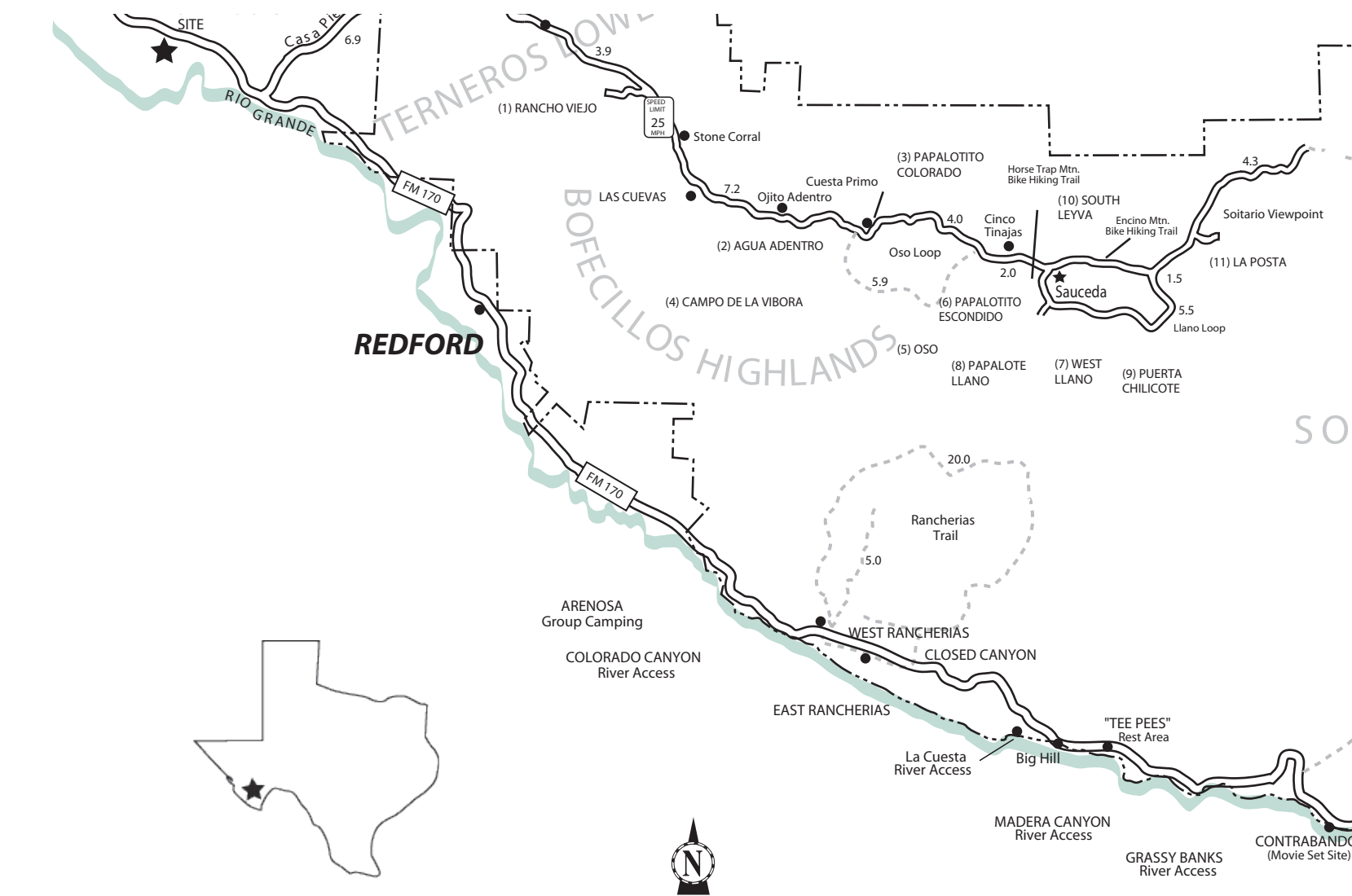
including 16 species of bats with an additional eight more species of bats having the potential to occur within the park. There are at least 30 species of snakes and over 300 species of birds reported



from BBRSP and the immediate vicinity. The park is home to a number of state-listed taxa including the zone-tailed hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*), reticulated gecko (*Coleonyx reticulatus*), Trans-Pecos black-headed snake (*Tantilla cucullata*), Texas lyre snake (*Trimorphodon biscutatus*) and Chihuahuan shiner (*Notropis chihuahuana*). Other mammals of interest that have been documented within the boundaries of the park include black bear (*Ursus americanus*), mountain lions (*Felis concolor*) and white-nosed coati (*Nasua narica*). Game species such as mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and collared peccary, or javelina, (*Tayassu tajacu*) are common and offer limited hunting opportunities.



Rapidly becoming a threat to soil, water, native wildlife, and vegetation resources are increasing populations of aoudad, feral burros and feral hogs. To date, the hogs are found in the Cienega area along Alamito Creek and aoudad are near the Rio Grande, especially in Tapado Canyon.



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Area Map

Directions: The west entrance at Fort Leaton State Historic Site and the Big Bend Ranch State Park Complex Office is located 4 miles southeast of Presidio, on the River Road (FM 170). The east entrance at Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center is located 1 mile east of Lajitas on the River Road (FM 170).



Big Bend^{State Park}

Park Overview

Big Bend Ranch State Park in Presidio and Brewster Counties between Presidio and Lajitas, Texas is in the northern Chihuahuan Desert. The park contains over 300,000 acres and has about 23 miles of river frontage along the Rio Grande, the international boundary between the U.S. and Mexico. Elevations range from about 2,350 feet along the Rio Grande to over 5,000 feet at Oso Mountain and Fresno Peak. Climate is typical of a high desert setting with hot summers, mild winters and low annual precipitation.

The geologic history of Big Bend Ranch ranges over 600 million years and presents a unique geologic story. Big Bend Ranch State Park contains bedrock exposures ranging from Paleozoic deep-marine sediments to tuffs, rhyolites and basalts that resulted from Tertiary igneous activity. Tectonic activity from the Marathon-Ouachita and Laramide orogenies and present day Basin-and-Range extension has created faults, folds, horsts and grabens to form the rugged terrain that characterizes the landscape. Along with these upheavals were many intrusions and several volcanoes.

Deep layers of sedimentary and volcanic deposits between igneous layers capture water thus forming small, perched aquifers. Larger bolsons (self-drained grabens) capture larger amounts of water forming larger, though local, aquifers. These geologic controls provide Big Bend Ranch State Park with many springs despite its desert setting. The relative abundance of groundwater, riparian areas, and the Rio Grande attracted humans to the area as early as 9,000 to 10,000 years ago and, more recently, encouraged sheep, goat and cattle ranchers to settle and work the area. The Big Bend Ranch area is one of the better-watered areas of Trans-Pecos Texas.

Water and Hydrology: Springs are a key natural resource of BBRSP. Over 100 springs, mostly in the Fresno and Ternereros Creek drainages, have been recorded. It is probable that more await discovery around the Bofecillos volcanic platform.

Many of the park's creeks are ephemeral in nature. However, the larger drainages, such as Alamito and Cienega Creeks, have permanent stream flow. All of the drainages in BBRSP are part of

the Rio Grande drainage basin; all are subject to flash flooding. A census of wells and windmills is in progress in the park. An inventory of wells and water levels and a spring survey will provide information about groundwater reserves in local aquifers.

Entrance Fees:

\$5 per day, per person 13 and older from October-April

\$7 per day, per person 13 and older from May-September

Group School-Sponsored Trip entrance fee per person (not for overnight stays): \$1 - \$5

Contact the Park to make arrangements and for pricing.