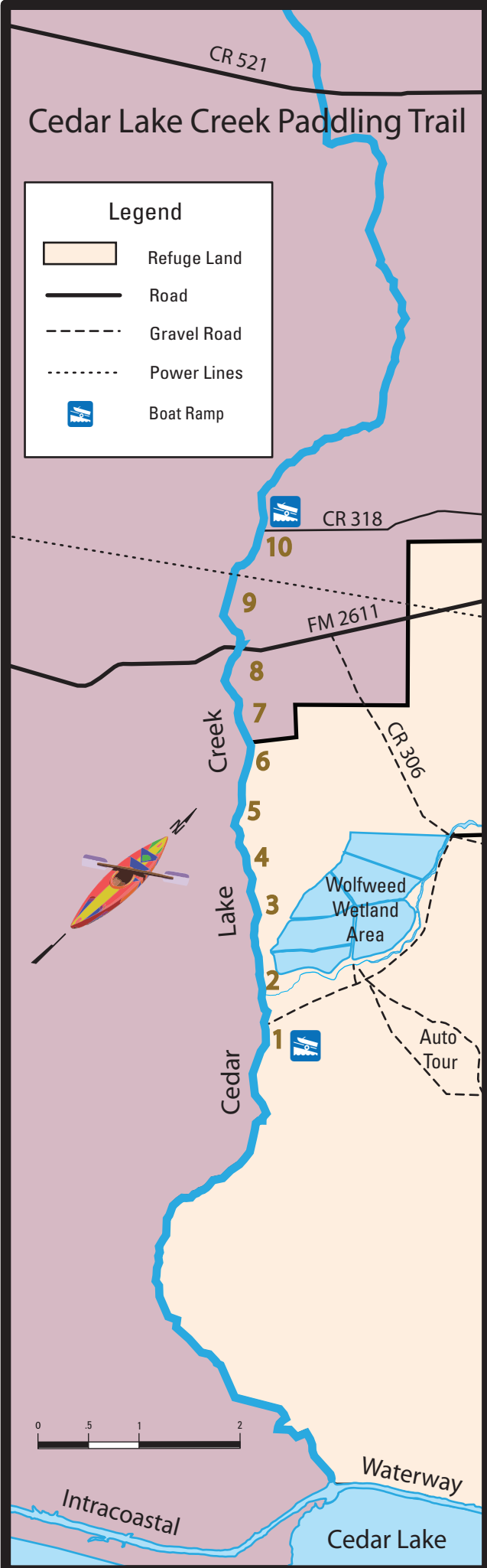


Cedar Lake Creek Paddling Trail

Legend

- Refuge Land
- Road
- Gravel Road
- Power Lines
- Boat Ramp



Cedar Lake Creek Paddling Trail

San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge



Welcome

Welcome to the Cedar Lake Creek Boating Trail, located on the San Bernard NWR in the Texas Mid-Coast NWR Complex. The Texas Mid-Coast NWR refuge incorporates three major Refuges as well as a number of smaller units. Ecosystems within the refuges represent wetlands, coastal prairies, estuaries, and Columbia Bottomlands. This forested, prairie and estuarine region consists of the area around the Brazos, San Bernard and Colorado Rivers to about 75 miles from the coast. The refuges help to preserve vital habitat to migratory waterfowl and songbirds. The primary mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is preserving fish, birds, wildlife, and their environment. In addition we seek to provide an educational and recreational resource for visitors. Our expectation is that you will respect this resource and our hope is that you will enjoy your visit.

Trail Overview

Cedar Lake Creek meanders through salt marshes and hardwood bottomlands from the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) to almost CR 521. North of CR 521, North of this area it becomes seasonal, wet only when there has been ample rain in its watershed. See the map on last page of this brochure. For thousands of years, this creek has provided a vital source of freshwater, food and habitat. In fact, this is the area where the 15,000 year-old prehistoric woman, known as BZT-1 was found. It is also along this creek that a confederate army camp was based and later during the Reconstruction Era, a freedman settlement area. This creek is roughly the coastwise center of the area first settled by the early Anglo settlers to Texas. The initially developed segment extends from the SBNWR Boat Ramp, Stop 6.0, northwestwardly. The overarching theme of the trail is that of change – from a saline estuarine environment to and increasingly more diverse, lush hardwood bottomland. Each year, almost 30 million migratory birds stop in the Columbia Bottomlands. On a year round basis you can expect to see kingfishers, herons, wood ducks, other waterbirds and many warblers. It is also the home of opossums, armadillos, bobcats, and raccoons. Almost invariably you won't see any animals since most of them avoid being seen by coming out only at night. Snakes often seen here include the water moccasin, copperhead and secretive eastern coral snake, along with numerous non-venomous snakes. In the southern parts of the creek one can find redfish while in the northernmost, freshwater region one can fish for catfish.

Recommendations, Rules & Regulations

It is your responsibility to be a safe boater. In the space available here it is not possible to cover all of the State and Federal (including the SBNWR Rule. However, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has a very good website with much of the state and good practice spelled out:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/>

We would like to present some basic topics we think are important – and you may not be aware of.

- You should pay careful attention to present and previous weather conditions. Strong winds and currents can result in hazardous conditions.
- Fishing and Crabbing must be done in accordance with State and Federal regulations.
- Use of Crab traps on Refuge property is prohibited
- Campfires, open flames, fireworks and firearms are prohibited on Refuge property
- Camping is prohibited on Refuge Property.
- Do not litter the creek or surrounding land. Please pack out any litter you generate and any that you find.
- The land on either side of the Cedar Lake Creek is either public (at the places where the roads intersect or cross over the creek), private, or belongs to the Refuge.
- You should NOT go onto private property except in the case of a serious emergency.
- There are no public restroom facilities available on the creek.
- You should NOT go onto Refuge property except in the case of a serious emergency.
- Do not head in a southeasterly direction from the SBNWR boat ramp. It is a long way (6 miles or so) to the nearest points to exit from the water and there are potentially very dangerous oyster beds that may not be passable.

The Trail

There are four possible places one can put your boat in. Except for the SBNWR Boat Ramp, Stop 6.0, these places are unimproved – meaning that people use them for fishing but there are no bulkheads, high grass, and no public parking areas so you will need to park on the road right of way. The stop numbers are the approximate distance, along the creek, from the mouth of Cedar Lake Creek at the Intracoastal Waterway. The trail is described as if one is heading from the southeast to the northwest.

Stop 6.0 - Cordgrass Stop

When you look south you will see a region of sea grasses – most commonly cordgrass and (I forgot the other name). Describe the two sea grasses and how to tell the difference. This section of the creek is, depending on the state of winds and tide and rainfall history, quite saline even though it is some 6 miles from the Gulf. The plants have ways of taking in the salt water, separating the fresh water from the salt and rejecting the salt. Note that there is very little diversity here.

Stop 7.0 - Cacklebur Slough

A slough (pronounced “slew”) is a relatively narrow, usually but not always navigable by a canoe or kayak, stream of water. It is where a creek or river backs up into the land. Cacklebur Slough runs about north and south – past CR 306. During times when it is wet it extends about 3 miles.

Stop 8.0 - WolfWeed Reservoir

During times when Cedar Lake Creek is high (usually winter/spring or from a hurricane) SBNWR takes water from the creek to fill the Wolfweed Reservoir. During the drier times this water is diverted to the Moist Soil Unit and the adjacent wetlands. This is a wetland restoration project. During the winter, this wetland is the home for Snow Geese and other water birds.

Stop 8.5 - Spanish Moss

The grayish looking plant hanging from the trees to the east is Spanish Moss. This plant prefers partial sun conditions and requires high humidity – that is primarily how it gets its water. Therefore it requires a host such as a live oak or hackberry tree. . . Birds use Spanish Moss to make nests and the early settlers used it for bedding.

Stop 9.0

Hackberry Tree

On the eastern bank you will see a stand of Hackberry trees. The small hard fruits that give it its name are eaten by wildlife. They are a favorite of robins and mockingbirds (the state bird of Texas). In this environment this tree will grow to about 30 feet tall. In more favorable environments it can grow to 100 feet tall.

Stop 9.5 - Live Oak

The large trees on the eastern bank are Live Oaks. From this point northward you will see Live Oaks, many with Spanish Moss hanging from them. Hence, they have come to be a symbol of the south. They are an evergreen but lose their leaves in the spring. Sometimes this happens over a period of time and, at other times, they lose their leaves over a long period of time and new ones start coming in. This happens over a period of, roughly, 1 to 2 months.

Stop 10.0 - Eastern Red Cedar

The "Christmas Tree" –like trees to your east are Eastern Red Cedars. They are members of the Pine family. There are Five Families of Pines (100 Species) in North America. Some of these have cones (conifers) and some have berries. The Eastern Red Cedars get their name from their reddish wood. They are closely related to the Southern Red Cedars also seen along the Gulf Coast. The Eastern Red Cedars range from here to much further north – up through much of the Eastern U.S.

Stop 10.5 - Housing & Pastures

Here you can see, on the western bank, the first of the housing and pastures where the vegetation, including trees have been cleared. When this land is cleared it 1) increases the destructiveness of floods, 2) increases soil erosion along the banks, 3) allows land-borne contaminants (fertilizers, oil, etc.) to reach the water, and 4) reduces the amount of water going into the groundwater and eventually to wells and aquifers. In addition, it reduces and alters (by changing the areas adjacent to other areas) the habitat for birds and wildlife.

Stop 11.0 – Cattails & Bullrush

The 3 to 4 feet tall grass growing in the water, at the bank are called Cattails. They get their name from their 6 in or so long "fruit" which resembles a Cat's tail. When this "fruit" matures (in the late fall) these seeds will disperse so, for the winter months the Cattails won't have a cat's tail. When you see Cattail's you know that the water is fresh – no to little salt – because these plants have a very low tolerance for salt. North of this point the primary fish is catfish.

Stop 11.1 - CR 2611

This is a creek access point. You will certainly note that the peace and serenity of the creek is largely gone. Just south – a hundred feet or so - of this bridge is the old bridge and crossing point that was used from the early Texas settlement (by the Anglos) days until 19xx when the road was moved and paved. You will note a Swallow nest under the bridge on the west end.

Stop 11.2 - CR316

There is no bridge here. If you are taking your boat out here, take some time to reflect on the changes you have observed from the input point at SBNWR. The great diversity of plants and trees you see here reflect the more favorable (less harsh) environment of this area. Both areas are necessary from a system perspective. Some animals, birds, and sea-life require the harsher (for most forms of life) environment. Also, the areas one sees on the more southern parts of the trail serve as a buffer (to take up the effects of wind and water that comes out of the south).

Stop 12.0 – CR 521

Although it will be rare that you will be able to get out or put in your boat at CR521, if conditions permit CR164 (Matagorda County), starts and heads south just west of where the creek passes over CR521. However, the recommended strategy for an itinerary is to go as far north as you can and then turn around and head back in a southeasterly direction to a point to take out.