

Wilderness Passport

Your Guide to Becoming
a Nature Explorer!



HOUSTON
WILDERNESS

It's Our Nature



Hi! I'm Hoppi, your guide on your journey to becoming a nature explorer.

At Houston Wilderness, we want you to visit and learn about nearby wilderness areas. Did you know that the Houston Wilderness region has 10 different ecosystems?

Each time you visit a different ecosystem, put a sticker on your passport showing that you were there, just like a real passport. To download stickers, please go to houstonwilderness.org/passportstickers

To find each site's webpage, go to Houston Wilderness's website by using the QR code on page 2.

For GGQ schools and participants please go to www.greatgreenquest.org

Also throughout this passport you will find out the answers to these and other questions:

- What is the longest river that begins and ends in Texas?
- How many birds pass through the Columbia Bottomlands every year?
- What is the Attwater's Prairie Chicken and what does "endangered" mean?

Ecoregions

Estuaries & Bays

Bayou Wilderness

Prairie Systems

Trinity Bottomlands

Big Thicket

Piney Woods

Columbia Bottomlands

Coastal Marshes

Post Oak Savannah

Gulf of Mexico

Name _____
First _____ Last _____

Houston Wilderness ecosystem I live in: _____

County _____ State _____

Name of School: _____

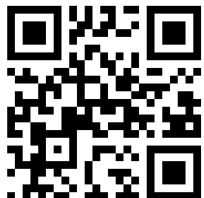
Date Issued: _____
Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

Date Completed: _____
Month _____ Day _____ Year _____

Your picture here



Issuing Authority: **Houston Wilderness**



www.houstonwilderness.org

My Discoveries

The coolest thing I saw: _____

The weirdest thing I saw: _____

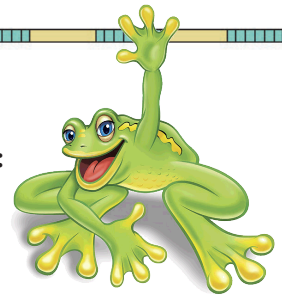
Something I did not know before: _____

Best part of my visit: _____



Did you know that **Sea Center Texas** has a "touch tank?" You can gently feel blue crabs, hermit crabs, stone crabs, snails and even anemones.

My favorite thing I saw or did:



Estuaries and Bays



You've heard of nurseries for babies – well, the marshes along the Texas gulf coast provide a nursery area for young fish and shellfish. Where freshwater from rivers meets saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico, you can find an amazing diversity of animals, from fish and oysters to shrimp and blue crabs.

Did you know that 90 percent of the commercial fish and shellfish caught in Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico spend at least part of their lives in an estuary? Can you draw a food web that includes organisms that live in bays and estuaries?

Estuaries and Bays sites to visit:

- 1 Galveston Island State Park “Bay Side” (H-6)
14901 FM 3005 Galveston, TX 77554 • (409) 737-1222
- 2 Texas State Marine Center, Palacios (J-3)
102 Marine Center Drive Palacios, TX 77465 • (361) 972-3774
- 3 Artist Boat (H-7)
2415 Ave K Galveston, TX 77550 • (409) 770-0722



Did you know that **Sea Center Texas** has a “touch tank?” You can gently feel blue crabs, hermit crabs, stone crabs, snails and even anemones.





Bayou Wilderness



The brown ribbons of water winding through neighborhoods and along city streets may look dirty, but they're actually carrying sand, soil and nutrients down to their ultimate destination: the bays and estuaries.

These waterways also have a number of creatures in them (yes, fish do live in these waters) and they provide homes and food sources to many wild creatures, including opossums, raccoons, armadillos and alligators. They also provide a needed wet place for toads and dragonflies that eat millions of mosquitoes!

Bayou Wilderness sites to visit:

- 1 **Armand Bayou Nature Center (G-6)** 
8500 Bay Area Blvd. Pasadena, TX 77258 • (281) 474-2551
- 2 **Arthur Storey Park (G-5)** 
7114 W. Sam Houston Pkwy Houston, TX 77072 • (281) 496-2177
- 3 **Buffalo Bayou - parks along Shepherd (F-5)** 
Drive east to the Turning Basin Houston, TX • (713) 752-0314
- 4 **Houston Arboretum & Nature Center (F-5)** 
4501 Woodway Drive Houston, TX 77024 • (713) 681-8433



Did you know that the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center participates in the **Texas Amphibian Watch**? This program is used to **count the number of frogs and toads** in Texas. Volunteers are trained to listen to amphibian calls and record them.

Bayou Wilderness sites to visit:

- 5 **Eddie V. Gray Wetlands Center (F-6)** ■
1724 Market Street Baytown, TX 77520 • (281) 420-7128
- 6 **Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center (E-5)** ■
20634 Kenswick Drive Humble, TX 77338 • (281) 446-8588
- 7 **Keith Weiss Park (F-5)** ■
12300 Aldine Westfield Rd. Houston, TX 77093 • (832) 394-8805
- 8 **Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens (E-5)** ■
22306 Aldine Westfield Rd Humble, TX 77338 • (281) 443-8731

Bayou Wilderness sites to visit:

- 9 **Memorial Park (F-5)** ■
6100 Hermann Park Dr. Houston, TX 77030 • (713) 863-8403
- 10 **Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center (G-6)** ■
3997 River Drive Houston, TX 77017 • (713) 640-2407
- 11 **Shangri La Botanical
Gardens & Nature Center (E-9)** ■
2111 West Park Avenue Orange, Texas 77630 • (409) 670-9113
- 12 **Terry Hershey Park (F-5)** ■
15200 Memorial Drive, Houston, TX • (281) 496-2177



Prairies



Did you know that the Houston area used to be home to many bison and tall grasses? When settlers arrived, most of Houston had prairie grasses taller than a 6-foot person. Today, less than 1 percent of the original coastal prairie still exists. These areas are very important to migrating birds and are home to more than 1,000 plant species, including big bluestem and little bluestem. Can you see the blue in little bluestem?

Can you describe the relationship between the Native Americans and the bison?

Prairies sites to visit:

- 1 **Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR (G-3)**
FM 3013 Eagle Lake, TX 77434 • (979) 234-3021
- 2 **George Ranch Historical Park (G-5)** • (281) 545-9212
10215 FM 762 Richmond, TX 77406-1248
- 3 **Texas City Prairie Preserve** • (409) 941-9114
4702 Highway 146 North Texas City, TX 77590
- 4 **Katy Prairie Conservancy Wildlife**
Viewing Platform - Site 100 on Upper TX Coast Birding • (713) 523-6145
Trail - west of Nelson Farm Preserve 28411 Sharp Road Katy, TX
- 5 **Sheldon Lake State Park (F-6)**
15315 Beaumont Highway Houston, TX 77049 • (281) 456-2800



Did you know that the **Attwater's Prairie Chicken** is one of the rarest birds in the world?

One hundred years ago there were 1 million Attwater's Prairie Chickens living in the wild. Today, there are **fewer than 100** left in the wild.

Trinity Bottomlands





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The Trinity River area is home to many large hardwood trees, including cypress and tupelo. These trees act as a very important flood buffer. When rains make the Trinity River grow wider, this area absorbs the floods, holding back water with the roots of the trees and plants that grow along its shores.

Did you know that cypress trees have adaptive features called “knees”? Can you think of ways “knees” might help the tree survive?

Trinity Bottomlands sites to visit:

- 1 Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge (E-7) 
01 FM 1011 Liberty, TX 77575 • (936) 336-9786
Coordinates: (30.098288, -94.765547)
- 2 USACE Wallisville Lake Project (F-7) 
FM 563 Wallisville, TX 77597-0036 • (409) 389-2285



Did you know that **half of all the bird species** identified in the United States live in or migrate through the Trinity and Columbia Bottomlands?

Big Thicket



In the thick, green woods known as the Big Thicket, you can find orchids and insect-eating plants! The Big Thicket is a fragile ecosystem where Southeastern swamp meets Eastern hardwood forest, Midwestern prairie and elements of the Southwestern desert landscape. The diversity of plants here attracts many migrating songbirds.

Can you name four kinds of insect-eating plants found in the Big Thicket? What sorts of trees provide the best habitat for songbirds?

Big Thicket sites to visit:

- 1 **Big Thicket National Preserve (D-8)**
6102 FM 420 Kountze, TX 77625 • (409) 951-6700
- 2 **Martin Dies, Jr. State Park (B-8)**
634 Private Road 5025 Jasper, TX 75951 • (409) 384-5231
- 3 **Village Creek State Park (D-8)**
US 96 Lumberton, TX 77657 • (409) 755-7322



Did you know that **Big Thicket National Preserve** has over 45 miles of hiking trails? Did you also know that along these trails live several species of **carnivorous plants**? But don't worry, these plants prefer insects to humans!

Piney Woods



The Piney Woods are named for loblolly, shortleaf and longleaf pines. Mostly found in East Texas, these trees stretch all the way west to Montgomery County, just north of Houston. Longleaf pines were almost lost due to logging and lack of fire, but thanks to new forestry methods, they will hopefully make a return.

How does the use of controlled fires help longleaf pines grow back? How does fire affect the other organisms in this ecosystem?

Piney Woods sites to visit:

- 1 **Lake Houston Park (E-6)** ■ • (281) 354-6881
22031 Baptist Encampment Road New Caney TX 77357-7731
- 2 **W. Goodrich Jones State Forest (E-5)** ■
1328 FM 1488 Road Conroe, TX 77384 • (936) 273-2261
- 3 **Lake Livingston State Park (C-6)** ■
300 Park Road 65 Livingston, TX 77351 • (936) 365-2201
- 4 **Huntsville State Park (C-5)** ■
Park Road 39 Huntsville, TX 77342-0508 • (936) 295-5644
- 5 **Montgomery County Preserve (E-5)** ■
Located behind 1122 Pruitt Road Spring, TX • (713) 524-2100
- 6 **Sam Houston National Forest (C-5)** ■
National Forests & Grasslands in Texas
394 FM 1375 West New Waverly, TX 77358 • (936) 344-6205



Did you know that the **endangered red-cockaded woodpecker** is the only American bird to carve out its nesting cavity in a living pine tree? Red-cockaded woodpeckers prefer to nest in **longleaf pines** over 100 years old, but will adapt to other pine species.

Columbia Bottomlands



Every year, almost 30 million migratory birds stop in this area along the Brazos, Colorado and San Bernard rivers. The old trees in these wet, low-lying and insect-rich forests help provide rest and food for the birds.

Did you know that the Colorado River flows almost 900 river miles and drops roughly 3,000 feet from the river's origin in Dawson County to Matagorda Bay? It is the longest river that has its entire course in Texas. Can you trace the length of the Colorado River on a map?

Columbia Bottomlands sites to visit:

- 1 Brazos Bend State Park (G-5)**
21901 FM 762 Needville, TX 77461 • (979) 553-5102
- 2 San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge (J-5)**
6801 CR 306 Brazoria, TX 77515 • (979) 964-3639
- 3 Matagorda County Birding Nature Center (I-4)**
1025 State Highway 35 S Bay City, TX 77414 • (979) 245-3336
- 4 Bates M. Allen Park (H-4)**
630 Charlie Roberts Ln, Kendleton, TX 77451 • (281) 835-9419



Did you know that the number of birds stopping in the Columbia Bottomlands is so large that **they can be seen on radar** when they fly across the Gulf of Mexico?

Coastal Marshes



Coastal marshes act as important sponges, helping slow and absorb storm surges (when wind and rain increase) that might otherwise do greater damage farther inland. Coastal marsh wetlands also act as filters, as the plants and soils found there clean the water of sediment and pollutants.

Can you name five organisms you might find in a coastal marsh? What special adaptations do they have for living in this ecosystem?

Coastal Marshes sites to visit:

- 1 **Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge (G-8)**
FM 1985 Anahuac, TX 77514 • (409) 267-3337
- 2 **San Jacinto Battleground State Park (F-6)**
3523 Battleground Rd. LaPorte, TX 77571 • (281) 479-2421
(TX Hwy 134)
- 3 **Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge (I-6)**
County Road 227 Freeport, TX 77541 • (979) 922-1037



Did you know that Southeast Texas is one of the best places for **alligator viewing**? At **Anahuac NWR** you can often see the alligators sunning themselves on the banks of the bayous and ponds!

Post Oak Savannah



The Post Oak Savannah is a land of mostly grassy areas with clumps of post oak trees scattered throughout. In the past, fire was an important part of the ecosystem, where it would burn before being stopped by either a change in topography or the weather. The post oaks would survive even if wildfires destroyed the grasses, leaving clumps of trees on the grassy plains.

The Post Oak Savannah is home to many animals, including wild turkeys, red-tailed hawks, white-tailed deer and coyotes. What are some of the ways that wild turkeys get water in this ecosystem?

Post Oak Savannah sites to visit:

- 1 **Stephen F. Austin State Park (F-3)**
Park Road 38 San Felipe TX 77473-0125 • (979) 885-3613
- 2 **Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park (E-3)**
23200 Park Road 12 Washington, TX 77880 • (936) 878-2214



Did you know that Post Oaks can grow to be 300 years old? There have even been some Post Oaks found that were over **400 years old!**

Gulf of Mexico



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Kathy Adams Clark

Surrounded by the United States, Mexico and Cuba, the Gulf of Mexico is more than half a million square miles of warm, sunlit waters and a steady food supply for an array of fish, wildlife and humans alike. About two-thirds of the continental United States drains into the Gulf, including states as far away as Montana and New York.

The Gulf of Mexico is the ninth largest body of water in the world and home to unique coral reef ecosystems, including the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, about 100 miles from the coast of Galveston.

Gulf of Mexico sites to visit:

- 1 Sea Center Texas (H-5)** ■
300 Medical Drive Lake Jackson, TX 77566 • (979) 292-0100
- 2 Matagorda Bay Nature Park (J-4)** ■
6420 FM 2031 Matagorda, TX 77457 • (979) 863-2603
- 3 Galveston Island State Park “Gulf Side” (H-6)** ■
14901 FM 3005, Galveston, TX, 77554 • (409) 737-1222
- 4 Houston Audubon’s Bolivar Flats Bird Sanctuary** ■
For directions visit: <http://www.houstonaudubon/drault.aspx/MenuItemID/1133/MenuGroup1Boliver.html> • (713) 932-1639



Did you know that the Gulf Stream, which originates in the Gulf of Mexico, is **one of the strongest ocean currents on earth**? The stream exits the Gulf through the Strait of Florida, follows the eastern coastline of the United States and crosses the Atlantic Ocean to Europe and Africa.

Other Places to Explore



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The Houston Wilderness region has a rich, vibrant history that can be explored and learned about at a variety of museums and cultural centers throughout the 10 ecoregions. Discovering the roles that nature plays in the decisions our ancestors made can be fascinating and rewarding. Many of the “Other Places to Explore” sites offer special exhibits and programs that provide excellent learning opportunities for people of all ages.

Other Places to Explore:

- 1 **Houston Museum of Natural Science (G-5)** ■
One Hermann Circle Drive Houston, TX 77030 • (713) 639-4629
- 2 **Houston Zoo (G-5)** ■
1513 N. MacGregor Houston, TX 77030 • (713) 533-6500
- 3 **Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History (C-2)** ■
3232 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX 77802 • (979) 776-2195
- 4 **The Children’s Museum of Houston (G-5)** ■
1500 Binz Houston, TX 77004 • (713) 522-1138
- 5 **Museum of the Gulf Coast (F-9)** ■
700 Procter Port Arthur, TX 77640 • (409) 982-7000
- 6 **Center for the Arts & Sciences (I-5)** ■
400 College Blvd Clute, TX 77531 • (979) 265-7661
- 7 **Discovery Green (G-5)** ■
1500 McKinney Houston, TX 77010 • (713) 400-7336
- 8 **Bellaire Nature Discovery Center (G-5)** ■
7112 Newcastle Bellaire, TX 77401 • (713) 667-6550
- 9 **Hermann Park (G-5)** ■
6100 Hermann Park Drive, Houston TX 77030 • (713) 524-5876

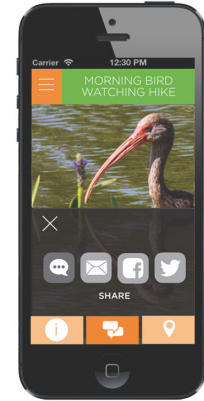


Museums and Zoos can be good places to learn about ecosystems locally and around the world. A breeding program at the Houston Zoo is working to save the **Attwater’s Prairie Chicken** from extinction.



Mission: Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

Vision: The vision of Ducks Unlimited is wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.



Get Outdoors Houston

Download the mobile friendly app today!

Get Out Here is a website and corresponding phone App designed as a portal into the fun and exciting outdoor adventures throughout the Houston Gulf Coast region. There are many events happening every week in Houston to help you get outside and engaged in different parts of the 10 regions in and around the Houston area. Go the site below to find what, where, and when events and outdoor activities taking place.

Getoutherehouston.org

HOUSTON WILDERNESS

is a broad-based alliance of business, environmental and government interests that acts in concert to protect, preserve and promote the unique biodiversity of the region's precious remaining ecological capital from bottomland hardwoods and prairie grasslands to pine forests and wetlands.

This mission is accomplished through
Convening various groups to promote protect and preserve the biodiversity in our 10 ecoregions; providing collaborative Problem-solving opportunities on critical environmental issues; and Educating the public on the many exciting outdoor opportunities in the Greater Houston Region and the health benefits associated with nature. These ecoregion landscapes decrease repetitive flooding, improve water quality boost outdoor recreation, ecotourism and economic growth.

www.houstonwilderness.org



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