Wilderness Passport
Your Guide to Becoming a Nature Explorer!

Houston Wilderness
It's Our Nature
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/passport.

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?
Next to each site is a letter (A-J) and a number (1-10). Refer to this map to get a general idea of where the site is located in the Greater Houston Area. Use the letters to go laterally across the map and then the number to go longitudinally.
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:
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. **Artist Boat (H-7)**
   - 2627 Avenue O Galveston, TX 77550
   - www.artistboat.org/
   - (409) 770-0722

2. **Galveston Island State Park (H-6)**
   - “Bay Side”
   - 14901 FM 3005 Galveston, TX 77554
   - www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/galveston-island
   - (409) 737-1222

3. **Texas State Marine Center (J-3)**
   - 102 Marine Center Drive Palacios, TX 77465
   - http://palaciosisd.fesdev.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/Texas%20State%20Marine%20Education%20Center
   - (361) 972-3774

4. **Pine Gully Park (G-6)**
   - 605 Pine Gully Road Seabrook, TX 77586
   - seabrooktx.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/12
   - (281) 291-5713

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Did you know that Galveston Bay is the second most productive estuary in the country? You can visit this unique ecosystem at **Galveston Island State Park “Bay Side”** and see many animals including birds, fish, and marsh rabbits.
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 (G-6)**
   - Nature Center
   - 8500 Bay Area Blvd. Pasadena, TX 77258
   - www.abnc.org/
   - • (281) 474-2551

2. **Arthur Storey Park (G-5)**
   - 7400 West Sam Houston Pkwy S, Houston, TX 77072
   - www.pct3/parks/storey-park
   - • (281) 496-2177

3. **Buffalo Bayou Park (F-5)**
   - 1800-3600 Allen Parkway/Memorial Drive
   - www.buffalobayou.org/
   - • (713) 752-0314

4. **Eddie V. Gray (F-6)**
   - Wetlands Center
   - 1724 Market Street Baytown, TX 77520
   - • (281) 420-7128

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 Edith L. Moore (F-7)  
Nature Sanctuary  
440 Wilchester Blvd, Houston, TX 77079  
http://houstonaudubon.org/sanctuaries/edith-moore/edith-moore.html

6 Houston Arboretum (F-5)  
& Nature Center  
4501 Woodway Dr, Houston, TX 77024  
http://houstonarboretum.org/

7 Jesse H. Jones Park (E-5)  
& Nature Center  
20634 Kenswick Drive Humble, TX 77338  
www.hcp4.net/jones/

8 Keith Wiess Park (F-5)  
12300 Aldine Westfield Rd. Houston, TX 77093  
www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/keithwiesspark.html

9 MacGregor Park (G-5)  
5225 Calhoun Houston, Texas 77021  
www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/macgregorpark.html

10 Mason Park (G-6)  
541 South 75th Street Houston, Texas 77023  
www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/masonpark.html
Bayou Wilderness
sites to visit:

11 Mercer Arboretum (E-5) • (281) 274-4160
& Botanic Gardens
22306 Aldine Westfield Road Humble, TX 77338
www.hcp4.net/mercer/

12 Memorial Park (F-5) • (713) 863-8403
6501 Memorial Drive Houston, TX 77007
www.memorialparkconservancy.org/visit-memorial-park.html

13 Sims Bayou Urban (G-6) • (713) 640-2407
Nature Center
3997 River Drive Houston, TX 77017
http://houstonaudubon.org/sanctuaries/sims-bayou.html

14 Shangri La Botanical (E-9) • (409) 670-9113
Gardens & Nature Center
2111 West Park Avenue Orange, Texas 77630
starkculturalvenues.org/shangrilagardens/

15 Terry Hershey Park (F-5) • (281) 496-2177
15200 Memorial Drive, Houston, TX
www.terryhersheypark.org

16 Tony Marron Park (G-5) • (713) 752-0314
808 N. York Street Houston, Texas 77003
www.buffalobayou.org/visit/destination/neighbor-808 N. York Street Houston, Texas 77003
www.buffalobayou.org/visit/destination/neighbor-parks
Did you know that the Houston area used to be home to many bison and tallgrasses? 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)**  •  (979) 234-3021
   FM 3013 Eagle Lake, TX 77434
   www.fws.gov/refuge/Attwater_Prairie_Chicken/

2. **George Ranch Historical Park (G-5)**  •  (281) 343-0218
   10215 FM 762 Richmond, TX 77406-1248
   http://www.georgeranch.org

3. **Texas City Prairie Preserve (H-6)**  •  (409) 941-9114
   4702 Highway 146 North Texas City, TX 77590
   www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/texas/placesweprotect/texas-city-prairie-preserve.xml

4. **Katy Prairie Conservancy Wildlife (E-4)**  •  (713) 523-6145
   Site 100 on Upper TX Coast Birding,
   Trail - west of Nelson Farm Preserve 28411 Sharp Road Katy, TX

5. **Sheldon Lake State Park (F-6)**  •  (281) 456-2800
   14140 Garrett Rd. Houston, TX 77044
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/sheldon-lake

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Did you know that pocket prairies are popping up in Houston’s urban core? The **M.D. Anderson Pocket Prairie** in the Texas Medical Center (TMC) provides an excellent wildlife habitat in the city and also presents educational and recreational opportunities that benefit patients and visitors of the TMC.
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 (E-7) National Wildlife Refuge**
   - 601 FM 1011 Liberty, TX 77575
   - Coordinates: (30.098288, -94.765547)
   - www.fws.gov/refuge/trinity_river/
   - • (936) 336-9786

2. **USACE Wallisville Lake Project (F-7)**
   - FM 563 Wallisville, TX 77597-0036
   - www.swg.usace.army.mil/Locations/WallisvilleLakeProjectOffice.aspx
   - • (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?
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) • (409) 951-6700
   6102 FM 420 Kountze, TX 77625
   www.nps.gov/bith/index.htm

2. Martin Dies, Jr. State Park (B-8) • (409) 384-5231
   634 Private Road 5025 Jasper, TX 75951
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/martin-dies-jr

3. Village Creek State Park (D-8) • (409) 755-7322
   US 96 Lumberton, TX 77657
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/village-creek

4. Lake Creek Preserve (E-5) • (281) 576-1634
   Sendera Ranch Dr, Montgomery, TX 77316
   http://lakecreektx.org/

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!
The Piney Woods are named for loblolly, shortleaf and long-leaf 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 Wilderness Park (E-6) • (281) 399-8464
   22031 Baptist Encampment Road New Caney TX 77357-7731
   www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/lakehoustonpark.html

2. W. Goodrich Jones State Forest (E-5) • (936) 273-2261
   1328 FM 1488 Road Conroe, TX 77384
   texasforestservice.tamu.edu/jones-state-forest/

3. Lake Livingston State Park (C-6) • (936) 365-2201
   300 Park Road 65 Livingston, TX 77351
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/lake-livingston

4. Huntsville State Park (C-5) • (936) 295-5644
   Park Road 39 Huntsville, TX 77342-0508
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/huntsville

5. Montgomery County Preserve (E-5) • (281) 353-8100
   1118 Pruitt Road Spring, TX 77380
   www.springcreekgreenway.org/mcp.htm

6. Sam Houston National Forest (C-5) • (936) 344-6205
   394 FM 1375 West New Waverly, TX 77358
   www.fs.usda.gov/detail/texas/about-forest/districts/?cid=fswdev3_008443

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.
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. Bates M. Allen Park (H-4) • (281) 835-9419
   630 Charlie Roberts Ln, Kendleton, TX 77451
   www.fortbendcountytx.gov/index.aspx?page=381

2. Brazos Bend State Park (G-5) • (979) 553-5101
   21901 FM 762 Needville, TX 77461
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/brazos-bend

3. Matagorda County (I-4) • (979) 245-3336
   Birding Nature Center
   1025 State Highway 35 S Bay City, TX 77414
   www.mcbnc.org/

4. San Bernard (J-5) • (979) 964-3639
   National Wildlife Refuge
   6801 CR 306 Brazoria, TX 77515
   www.fws.gov/refuge/san_bernard/

5. Seabourne Creek Nature Park (G-5) • (832) 595-3960
   3831 State Highway 36 Rosenberg, Texas
   http://rosenbergtx.gov/seabourncreek/

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 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 (G-8)**
   - Wildlife Refuge
   - FM 1985 Anahuac, TX 77514
   - www.fws.gov/refuge/Anahuac/
   - • (409) 267-3337

2. **Brazoria National (I-6)**
   - Wildlife Refuge
   - County Road 227 Freeport, TX 77541
   - www.fws.gov/refuge/brazoria
   - • (979) 964-4011

3. **East End Lagoon (H-7)**
   - On Galveston Island at the east end of Seawall Blvd.
   - along Boddecker Dr. adjacent to Apffel Park (East Beach)
   - www.eastendlagoon.org/about/
   - • (409) 797-5000

4. **San Jacinto (F-6)**
   - Battleground State Park
   - 3523 Independence Parkway South LaPorte, TX 77571 (TX Hwy 134)
   - www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/san-jacinto-battleground
   - • (281) 479-2431

5. **Sea Rim State Park (G-9)**
   - 19335 S. Gulfway Drive Sabine Pass, TX 77665
   - www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/sea-rim
   - • (409) 971-2559

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!
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
   www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/stephen-f-austin
   • (979) 885-3613

2. Washington-on-the-Brazos (E-3)
   State Park
   23200 Park Road 12 Washington, TX 77880
   www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/washington-on-the-brazos
   • (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!
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)**  • (979) 292-0100
   300 Medical Drive Lake Jackson, TX 77566
   www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/visitorcenters/seacenter/

2. **Matagorda Bay Nature Park (J-4)**  • (979) 863-2603
   6420 FM 2031 Matagorda, TX 77457
   www.lcra.org/parks/developed_parks/matagorda.html

3. **Galveston Island State Park**  • (409) 737-1222
   “Gulf Side” (H-6)
   14901 FM 3005, Galveston, TX, 77554
   www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/galveston-island

4. **Houston Audubon’s Bolivar Flats Bird Sanctuary**  • (713) 932-1639
   (G-7)
   For directions visit:
   http://houstonaudubon.org/sanctuaries/bolivar-flats/

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.
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. **Bellaire Nature Discovery Center**
   7112 Newcastle Bellaire, TX 77401
   www.naturediscoverycenter.org/
   • (713) 667-6550

2. **Brazos Valley Museum (C-2)**
   of Natural History
   3232 Briarcrest Drive Bryan, TX 77802
   www.brazosvalleymuseum.org/
   • (979) 776-2195

3. **Center for the Arts & Sciences (G-5)**
   Brazoria County 400 College Blvd Clute, TX 77531
   www.bcfas.org/
   • (979) 265-7661

4. **Children’s Museum of Houston (G-5)**
   1500 Binz Houston, TX 77004
   www.cmhouston.org/
   • (713) 522-1138

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.
Other Places to Explore:

5 Discovery Green • (713) 400-7336
1500 McKinney Houston, TX 77010
www.discoverygreen.com/

6 Hermann Park (I-5) • (713) 524-5876
6100 Hermann Park Drive, Houston TX 77030
www.hermannpark.org/

7 Houston Museum (G-5) of Natural Science • (713) 639-4629
One Hermann Circle Drive Houston, TX 77030
www.hmns.org/

8 Houston Zoo (G-5) • (713) 533-6500
6200 Hermann Park Drive Houston, TX 77030
www.houstonzoo.org/

9 Museum of the Gulf Coast (F-9) • (409) 982-7000
700 Procter Port Arthur, TX 77640
www.museumofthegulfcoast.org

10 Nature Discovery Center (G-5) • (713) 667-6550
7112 Newcastle Bellaire, TX 77401
www.naturediscoverycenter.org/
FAMILY FUN:
EXPLORE, PLAY, ENJOY AND... REPEAT!

Check out the Family Nature Club at houstonzoo.org for more information
Plan on a summer of adventure and fun by joining the Great Green Quest! It’s a friendly challenge for families, schools, nature lovers, and outdoor enthusiasts to visit all ten ecoregions over the summer.

For more information, or if you would like to become a sponsor for an area school, please visit greatgreenquest.org or houstonwilderness.org/ggq
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 ecoregions in and around the Houston area. Go to the site below to find what, where, and when events and outdoor activities are 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