



# Cypress Trail

## Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge

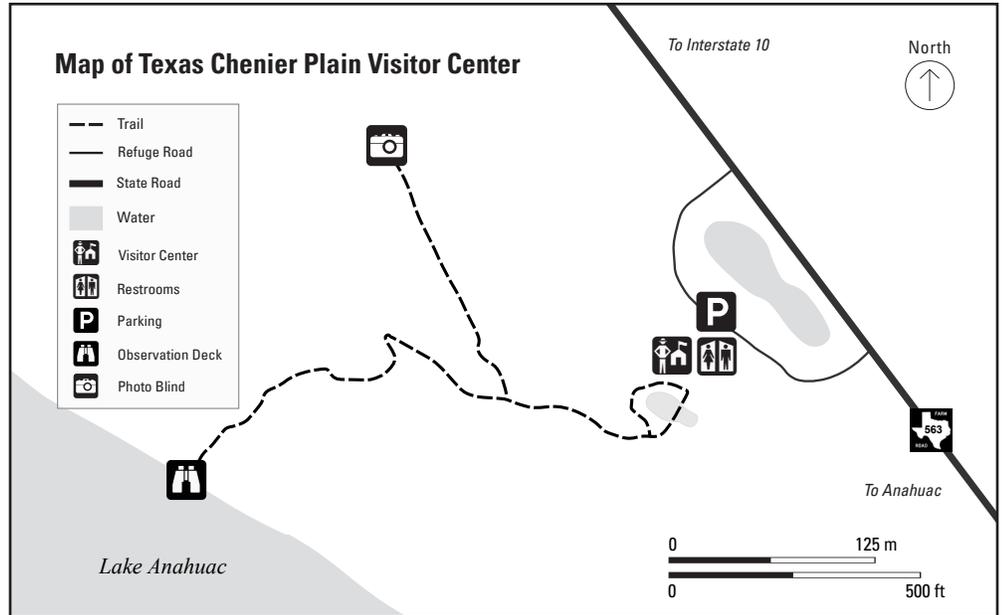
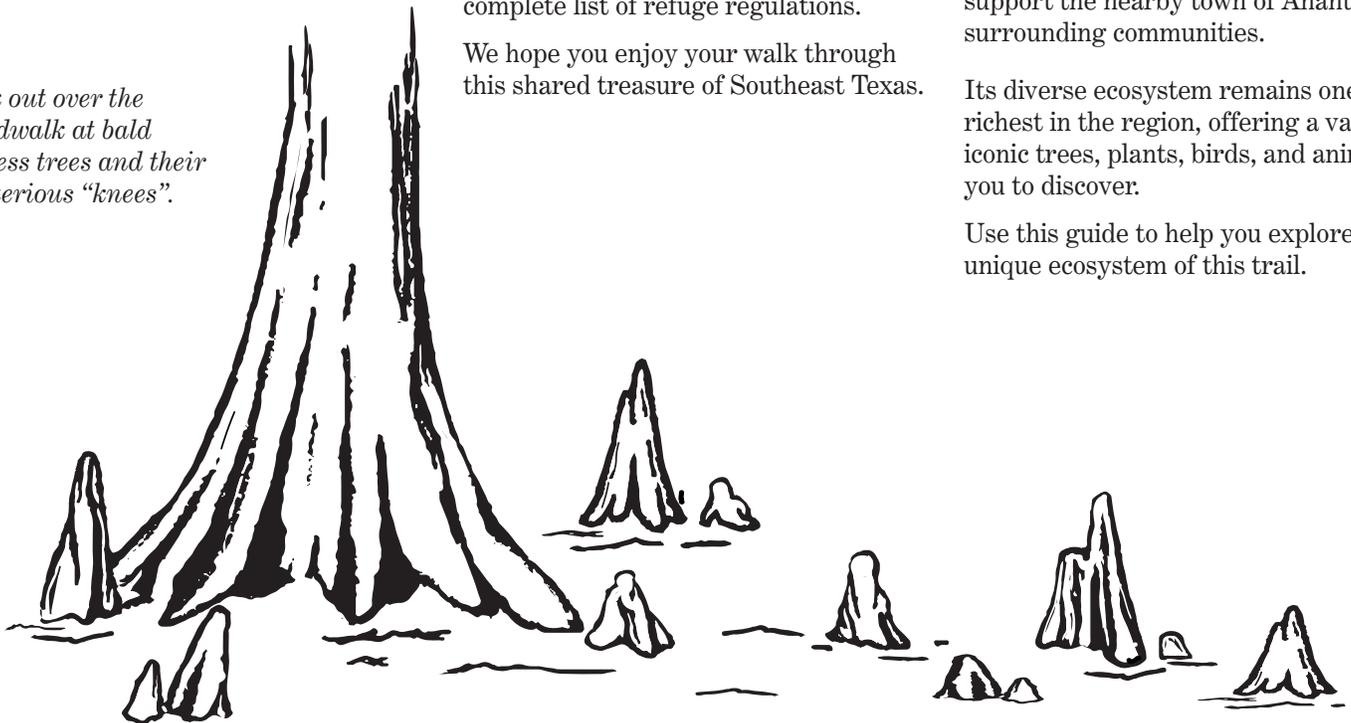
### Welcome

The **Cypress Trail** is a paved 0.25-mile (0.4 km) accessible trail located behind the **Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center** (a.k.a. Texas Chenier Plain Refuge Visitor Center). The visitor center and trail are located 2 miles (3.2 km) south of Interstate 10 (exit 810) and 4 miles (6.4 km) north of the City of Anahuac.

The trail meanders through bottomland hardwood forest teeming with oaks, hackberry, sweetgum, and pine, ultimately inviting visitors to a long boardwalk towards the peaceful Lake Anahuac. Here, surrounded by majestic bald cypress trees, one feels small among the giants which characterize the Cypress-Tupelo swamp ecosystem.

The Cypress Trail also offers a separate 0.1-mile (0.16 km) paved path to a wildlife photography blind. Take a peek at birds, mammals, and reptiles from the secrecy of panelled windows. At the blind, a quiet drip offers a steady source of water for migrating birds and local species.

*Look out over the boardwalk at bald cypress trees and their mysterious "knees".*



### Enjoy Your Visit

Poison ivy is common on the refuge and contagious during all seasons. To reduce disturbance to wildlife and for your safety, we ask all visitors to walk only on the paved trail and boardwalk.

Refer to the general brochure for a complete list of refuge regulations.

We hope you enjoy your walk through this shared treasure of Southeast Texas.

### Natural History Guide

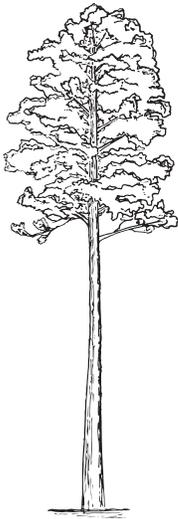
Lake Anahuac was once "Turtle Bay" until the mid-1900s when the mouth of Turtle Bay was gradually closed to provide a reservoir of freshwater to the residents of this region. Lake Anahuac now serves as a source of freshwater to support the nearby town of Anahuac and surrounding communities.

Its diverse ecosystem remains one of the richest in the region, offering a variety of iconic trees, plants, birds, and animals for you to discover.

Use this guide to help you explore the unique ecosystem of this trail.

## A Forest Full of Life

### Loblolly Pine



The Loblolly Pine is an evergreen Texas native known by its towering trunk. Dark blue-green foliage forms a beautiful crown at the top 1/4 of the tree. The namesake “loblolly” comes from the southern use of the word to mean “a depression”; it is thought that large stands of this abundant pine were often found growing near river bottoms.

### Ground Skink

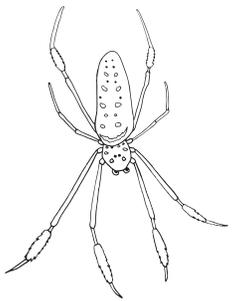
Moving rapidly through the forest leaves is the quick and shy Ground Skink. As small lizards with long tails and notably short legs, the Ground Skink resembles nothing more than a flash of grey/brown whipping through the leaf litter.

### Yellow Garden Spider & Golden Silk Orb-Weaver (Both are non-venomous)



Possibly the inspiration for Charlotte’s Web, the Yellow Garden Spider skillfully writes zig-zags

in her silky net.

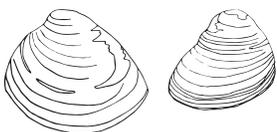


With large black-and-yellow bodies, both it and the Golden Orb-Weaver look scary but are actually harmless. From Spring through Fall these leggy

giants transform the Cypress Trail into a promenade of bright yellow webs spanning more than 6-feet (2 m) across.

### Rangia Clams

The chalky-white shells along the path belong to rangia clams. Rangia clams survive where freshwater and saltwater mix, were once an important food source for pre-colonial peoples, and today are often used in construction as road fill.



### Pileated Woodpecker

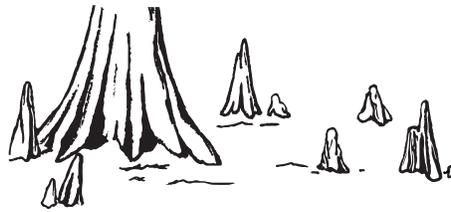
A long and loud series of sharp piping calls rings through the forest. *Wuk wuk wuk wuk wuk wuk wuk!* It belongs to the largest woodpecker in North America, the Pileated Woodpecker.



### Southern Swamps

#### Bald Cypress

With wide trunks and thick, strong wood, the Bald Cypress is adapted for swampy conditions. The pyramid-shaped base (a.k.a. “buttress”) forms a strong foundation and woody protrusions called “knees” grow upwards from their roots. The purpose of the knees is mystery. Most theories suggest that the knees help exchange oxygen during flooding, or anchor the trees to soft muddy soil.



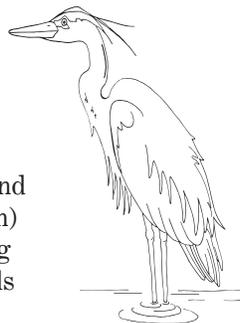
#### Spanish Moss

Spanish Moss is actually a plant, not a moss. It is also not from Spain, but rather is native to the Americas. French explorers called the plant “Spanish Beard” or “*Barbe Espagnol*” as a joke because it reminded them of the long beards of Spanish conquistadors. The Spaniards tried to counter by calling the plant “French Hair” or “*Cabello Francés*”, but alas, the name obviously didn’t stick as well.



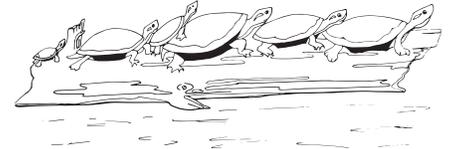
#### Great Blue Heron

The largest heron in North America, the Great Blue Heron has a 6-foot (1.8-m) wingspan and almost 5-foot (1.5-m) height. Upon taking flight, its call sounds like a loud raspy barking dog.



### Red-eared Slider

If basking in the sun were a sport, our turtles would be Texas champions. Here you might easily count two dozen turtles shell-to-shell on logs. Look for the signature red stripe on their heads to tell Red-Eared Sliders from other turtles.



### Sawgrass

Growing tall from the water near the first bench on the boardwalk, sawgrass is named for the sharp saw-like teeth on its large leaves. Ouch! Do not touch!

### Other Favorites

Other favorites include the Yellow-Crowned Night Heron (which nest in the spring), Wood Ducks (which are here year-round but generally are too shy to come out), and resident Otters (which sometimes swim quickly through the lake). Every once in a while a bald eagle or osprey will take flight, sometimes carrying a nice fish for a meal.

### Helping Habitat

A variety of nesting bird boxes have been placed along these habitats. The boxes mounted to trees are for the Eastern Screech Owl, the boxes standing on poles in the water are for the Prothonotary Warblers (small boxes) and the Wood Ducks (large boxes). Near the pond in front of the visitor center are a few boxes for Eastern Blue Birds.

The Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge helps native plants and animals thrive by providing a protected place for them to grow, and for you to enjoy.

### For More Information Contact

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