National Forests and Grasslands in Texas

2017-2018 Hunting Season

Texas is home to four national forests that stretch from the urban landscape of Houston to the Louisiana border, and to two national grasslands located north of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolex.

White-tailed deer is the game of choice in Texas and there’s no better place to bag that trophy buck than in the national forests and grasslands.

From mid-September to the end of January is prime hunting season and all hunters and those accompanying them must wear a daylight fluorescent orange cap or hat. A minimum of 400 square inches of fluorescent orange must be visible (144 square inches on both the chest and back, and a daylight fluorescent orange cap or hat.)

Hunting season is one of the busiest times in the forest, and safety should always be a primary concern. Visitors should check their surroundings and be aware of the possibility of falling limbs or trees. Remember, being in the woods is great, but you are responsible for your own safety.

When strong winds kick up, head to a clearing away from potentially falling trees. Place tents and park vehicles in areas that will not be hit by falling trees and limbs.

Some other safety precautions include:
- Much of the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas are remote, and medical assistance may not be readily available. Cell phones do not work in many areas of the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas. Visitors should take adequate food, water, first aid supplies and other equipment appropriate for the conditions and expected weather.
- Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use on the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas is limited to the multiple-use trail on the Sam Houston National Forest. Off-road use of motorized vehicles of any type is prohibited.

As gun deer hunting season begins, U.S. Forest Service officials are reminding hunters of guidelines designed to make their hunting trips to national forests safe and enjoyable, while sustaining the health of the forests.

Rains and flooding have damaged many roads in the forests and grasslands. While most roads have been repaired, some remain impassable and are closed. Check with the Ranger’s Office to make sure your favorite hunter camp is open.

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Each year, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) inventories deer populations in the national forests in Texas. As mentioned, the department includes antlerless deer in the annual harvest to seek a balanced population.

Designated areas and the number of permits issued vary from year to year and the number of requests usually exceeds the number of permits available.

Hunting antlerless deer in the national forests in Texas is conducted only within Wildlife Management Areas and only by permit.

For more information on antlerless deer permits, contact your local TPWD office or visit www.tpwd.texas.gov/drawahunts for application information and process instructions.

Game in the Forest

Many game species find favorable habitat in the national forests where timber stands range from recently harvested areas to stands more than 100 years old. The breaks or “edges” created where different aged stands meet are preferred by many species; so, the observant sportsman learns to recognize stand characteristics and the types of game animals to be found in them.

Fishing

Sam Rayburn Reservoir, Toledo Bend Reservoir and Lake Conroe are known for excellent fishing but there are other lakes to challenge anglers.

Some of the larger lakes in the national forests include Red Hill, Ratcliff, Boykin Springs and Double Lake. In the national grasslands, Coffee Mill, Crockett, Fannin, Cottonwood and Black Creek Lake are favorites. Windmill Lake on the LBJ Grasslands is designated a fly fishing only lake. Most of these lakes also have developed recreation areas. Texas fishing regulations and license requirements apply to all these water bodies.

Turkey Hunting

The U.S. Forest Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the National Wild Turkey Federation are partners in restocking wild turkeys on national forest lands.

The Caddo National Grasslands allow shotgun-only hunting in the spring. The LBJ National Grasslands has a fall and spring season for the Rio Grande turkey. Check the Texas Parks and Wildlife hunting guide for counties in the national forests that allow spring hunting.

Turkey season is closed in Angelina and Jasper counties.

Where to Find Birds

 Mourning doves prefer to feed in areas of open, bare ground with scattered stands of seed-producing weeds. Such conditions are found in recently logged stands where disturbed soil encourages weed growth. Bobwhite quail feed in these same stands and in stands up to five years after cutting, where grassy-weedy vegetation has grown and provides cover. Quail also use adjacent older timber stands for escape cover from predators and hunters.

Woodcock are a fairly common but lightly-hunted species in the national forests and grasslands. They can usually be found in bottomlands.

The small metal boundary signs are fastened either to trees or posts located on the boundary line. These markings and boundary signs helps the visitor to be aware of the boundaries. However, all land within this boundary is not under the exclusive control of the Department and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Recognition of these markings and boundary signs helps the visitor to be aware of the boundaries. However, all land within this boundary is not under the exclusive control of the Department and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Baiting

Baiting and hunting over baited areas to attract wildlife is not allowed in the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas.

How to Recognize National Forest Land

Maps commonly show proclaimed national forest boundaries. However, all land within this boundary is not national forest land, some is privately owned. The land shown in green on the maps indicate national forest land. Red paint and signs mark the boundaries between national forest land and private property. Recognition of these markings and boundary signs helps the visitor to be aware of the boundaries. However, all land within this boundary is not under the exclusive control of the Department and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Recognition of these markings and boundary signs helps the visitor to be aware of the boundaries. However, all land within this boundary is not under the exclusive control of the Department and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Small Game

Cottontail rabbits can be found in the same habitat as quail. Gray squirrels and fox squirrels are the most popular small game animals in the national forests. Gray squirrels prefer stands of bottomland hardwoods 40 years of age or older. The trees in gray squirrel habitat must be old enough to produce consistent crops of acorns and similar food. Most major rivers and creeks that flow through the national forest have these hardwood stands within their floodplains.

Fox squirrels also prefer older age timber stands; however, they are generally found in the transition zone between the bottomlands and uplands where there is a mix of hardwood and pine, similar to turkey habitat. They can also be found in older pine stands that contain scattered nut-producing trees.

Large Game

Deer hunting is a challenging sport and white-tailed deer can be found throughout the national forests. The season will sometimes determine where you can find small concentrations of deer, such as in hardwood stands during acorn fall.

It is very important to get to your shooting spot undetected, and don’t think going in under the cover of darkness will help. Make sure to use a creek or curtain of forest to cover your entry.

Scattered populations of wild or feral hogs live in the national forests. Although they are not classified as game animals, they provide some limited hunting opportunities, usually incidental to other types of hunting. Hogs are usually found in bottomlands.

Deer Stands

Deer stands may be used in the national forests and grasslands, but they must be portable and cannot be of a type that will deface or harm trees. Deer stands must be removed within 72 hours of placing one in the general forest or in a Wildlife Management Area. Since the forests and grasslands are open to public hunting, hunters cannot maintain exclusive rights to a hunting area.

Game on the Grasslands

The national grasslands provide favorable habitat for some of the small game animals found in the national forests. There is no commercial timber harvesting on the grasslands, and management is directed toward maintaining a stable or relatively non-changing vegetation type.

About 70 percent of the national grasslands is open prairie; the rest is wooded. Most of the wood areas are in small clumps on the prairie and along the numerous small streams and drainages.

Cottontail rabbits, doves, wild turkeys and bobwhite quail are found throughout the grasslands and are usually hunted in the prairies or along the edge of the wood. Fox squirrels can be found in the woods adjacent to creeks and drainages. Gray squirrels live in some of the bottomland hardwoods of the Caddo National Grasslands.

Birding

Bathing and hiking over baited areas to attract wildlife is not allowed in the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas.

Baiting

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Angelina National Forest

This map is a general guide and does not show exact boundaries or all roads. It is the user’s responsibility to know his or her location in the forest. Users should be aware that private property exists within the Forest Service boundary. Please respect our neighbors’ rights. Check with the District Ranger office where you hunt regarding special regulations or boundary locations. Deer processing is not allowed in Designated Campgrounds.

Legend
- Hunter Camp
- Designated Campground
- Boat Ramp
- District Office
- Sawmill Hiking Trail
- SFA Interpretive Trail
- Angelina River
- Attoyac Bayou
- Angelina River Bottom
- Wilderness
- Wildlife Management Area
- Sam Rayburn Reservoir
- USDA Forest Service

Hunter Camps
1: NFSR 316A
3: NFSR 307A
4: NFSR 317
5: NFSR 349
6: NFSR 350C
7: NFSR 308
8: NFSR 312
9: NFSR 302
10: Sexton Pond
11: NFSR 303
12: NFSR 347 below Parker Point Road
13: NFSR 374
14: Dispersed camping (more than 400 yards inside the wilderness boundary)
15: Attoyac Bayou (boat access camping only)
16: Angelina River (boat access camping only)

Designated Campgrounds
2: Townsend Park
17: Sandy Creek
18: Caney Creek Boat Launch
19: Boykin Springs
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Legend
- Hunter Camp
- Hunter Camp (No Deer Processing)
- Closed
- Designated Campground
- District Office
- Four C (4C’S) Hiking Trail
- Piney Creek Horse Trail
- Wildlife Management Area
- Wilderness
- County
- USDA Forest Service

Hunter Camps
1: NFSR 510A - Holly Bluff
2: FM 2262 - Stay Creek
3: NFSR 509 - Sandy Creek
4: NFSR 509C - Rock Hole
5: NFSR 568 - Longleaf
6: NFSR 571 - Piney
7: NFSR 586 - South Possum Walk
8: NFSR 557 - CLOSED
9: NFSR 516 - County Line Camp
10: NFSR 514
   514D - White Rock Horse Camp no deer processing allowed
12: NFSR 562 - Brushy Camp
14: NFSR 565 - Raines Morgan
15: NFSR 524A - Pine Springs
16: NFSR 518B - Merkel Creek
17: NFSR 511A - Neches Bluff
18: NFSR 539 - CLOSED
19: NFSR 512A - Pond Camp
20: NFSR 511 - Neches Bluff #2

Designated Campgrounds
- Hunting Camps
11: NFSR 566 - Piney Creek Horse Camp
13: Ratcliff Recreation Area

- Wildlife Management Area
- Wilderness
- County
- USDA Forest Service
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National Forests & Grasslands in Texas

- Big Creek Scenic Area
- Little Lake Creek Wilderness
- Multi-Use Trail
- Lone Star Hiking Trail
- Double Lake Bike Trail
- Lake Conroe
- To Dallas
- To Houston

Hunter Camps
1: NFSR 271 – Kelly’s Pond
2: NFSR 215 - Stubblefield Overflow
3: NFSR 234
4: Four Notch
5: NFSR 202 - Big Woods
6: NFSR 228 - Neblett Creek
7: NFSR 274 - Shell Oil Road
8: NFSR 220
9: NFSR 217-A
10: NFSR 208-H

Designated Campgrounds
1: NFSR 271 – Kelly’s Pond
11: Cagle Recreation Area
12: Stubblefield Recreation Area
13: Double Lake Recreation Area

Designated Hiking Camps
14-25: Lone Star Hiking Trail

Check with the District Ranger office where you hunt regarding special regulations or boundary locations. Deer processing is not allowed in Designated Campgrounds.

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Legend

- USDA Forest Service
- Lake Conroe
- Wilderness
- Scenic Area
- Trail
- Hunter Camp (no deer processing)
- Multi-use trail
- Designated Campground
- Boat Ramp
- Deer Camp (no deer processing)
- Designated Hiking Camp
These maps are a general guide and do not show exact boundaries or all roads. It is the user’s responsibility to know his or her location in the grasslands. Users should be aware that private property exists within the Forest Service boundary. Please respect our neighbors’ rights. Check with the District Ranger office where you hunt regarding special regulations or boundary locations.

Deer processing is not allowed in Designated Campgrounds.
Be Aware, Be Safe

- Trees can fall without warning.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Wear blaze orange in the woods.
- Make sure campfires are extinguished properly.
- Remember, your safety is your responsibility.

Safety Notice

All hunters and those accompanying them must wear daylight fluorescent orange at any time when hunting, except when hunting turkey or migratory birds.

A minimum of 400 square inches of fluorescent orange must be visible (44 square inches on both the chest and back, and a daylight fluorescent orange cap or hat.)

All camping in the Angelina, Davy Crockett, Sabine or Sam Houston National Forest or the Caddo National Grasslands must be in designated areas or developed recreation areas from Sept. 15 through Feb. 1.

Hunters using the wildlife management areas (WMAs) are required to have the $48 annual hunting permit to hunt deer, turkey, small game, waterfowl and feral hogs. “It’s the hunter’s responsibility to know the regulations and game limits while hunting in national forests and grasslands,” said Chris Crain, U.S. Forest Service patrol captain. “Hunters should check bag limits for the county where they are hunting and refer to this year’s hunting booklets for information to avoid citations. No baiting for wildlife or hunting over baited areas is allowed on the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas.”

Portable deer stands are allowed in national forests and grasslands and are limited to 72 hours in one location. To prevent damage to trees, the stands must not be nailed to trees. When hunters fail to remove their deer stands, it causes damage to forest land and creates an expensive, time-consuming cleanup.

Vehicles should not be parked near gates or in areas that would impede traffic and block roads.

For additional information on this year’s hunting season, please contact the Forest Service District Ranger offices.

Hunters may also visit the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas website at www.fs.fed.us/texas and review information under the “Hunting 2012-2013” link.

Wildlife Management Areas

Free Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are designated in the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas in cooperation with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Hunting is allowed in WMAs but the rules and regulations are slightly different and hunters must have the appropriate hunting permit from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department or any location that sells state hunting license. Be aware of boundaries.

The WMAs are:
- Angelina National Forest
  - Bannister 25,658 acres
  - Davy Crockett National Forest
    - Alabama Creek 14,561 acres
  - Sabine National Forest
    - Moore Plantation 26,455 acres
  - Caddo National Grassland
    - Caddo 16,150 acres
  - Sam Houston National Forest
    - Sam Houston 162,984 acres

Off-Highway Vehicles

Off-highway vehicles are only allowed on designated trails. The Sam Houston National Forest has the only designated OHV trail.

Camping

Developed recreation areas offer conveniences such as showers, restrooms and picnic facilities. Primitive camping is allowed except in designated scenic areas or where otherwise prohibited. During hunting season, camping is permitted only in designated hunter camps or in developed recreation areas. Contact ranger offices for more information on camp locations.

Maps

Maps and general information about the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas can be obtained from ranger offices or the forest supervisor’s office. Order forms are available on the Web at www.fs.usda.gov/texas and click on the maps link. Or call 936-639-8501 for information.

Snakes and Insects

Copperhead, Canebreak rattlesnake, Cottonmouth, Coral and Pigmy rattlesnake are poisonous snakes native to this area. Insect repellent is recommended to protect against mosquitoes, ticks and chiggers.

Leave No Trace

When you leave your camp, please be courteous and take your trash with you.

The Leave No Trace principles are:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

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