

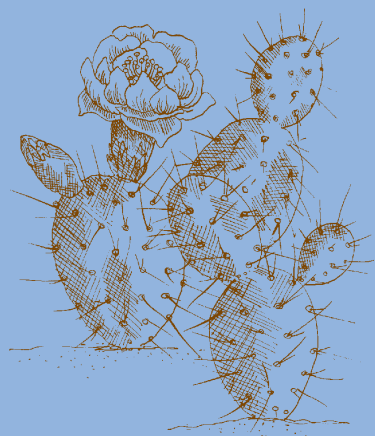


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One Capitol Mall,
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501-682-1191
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NOTE: To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.

For further information on other park facilities and trails contact:
Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area
1980 Hwy. 278 West
Wickes, AR 71973
870-385-2201
www.CossatotRiver@Arkansas.com

Photos—A.C. Haralson
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COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK-NATURAL AREA

Harris Creek Trail

Shale Pit

A shale pit is an area where the dark blue to black flaky rock known as shale was removed. It was used to surface dirt roads. As with any sort of surface mining, all of the soil and plants were removed. The trailhead, parking area and first couple of hundred feet of the trail are in the old shale pit. It can be observed that plants are slowly covering the shale pit.

In the spring this area is wet and you will see large numbers of plants. Most of these are annuals, which take advantage of moisture seeping out of the shale. Selenia, a small yellow flowering plant which grows in large numbers here, makes a spectacular display. Large mats of green mosses also grow here. During the summer this area is hot and dry. Most of the spring annuals have died, leaving their seeds to come up the



following spring. Some perennials which have adapted to growing and flowering during this hot, dry period are fame flower, prickly pear cactus and yucca. The fame flower is a small plant about six inches tall with long, round succulent leaves and a reddish flower which opens from about 3 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The Glade

The shale glade begins as you cross the foot bridge and start uphill. An area with thin soil over shale, a shale glade becomes very dry during the summer. Some of the plants adapted to this habitat are winged elm, post oak, eastern red cedar, fragrant sumac, umbrella plant, reindeer moss, false aloe and blazing star.

This is a fragile habitat because the soil is thin, rocks are loose and the plants are easy to dislodge. Please walk with care. At the shale glade there is an overlook of Baker Creek. Looking down, you can see where the creek is cutting into the shale. Old man's beard (lichen) hangs from some of the cedars. It is sometimes mistaken for Spanish moss.

Baker Creek

This section of the trail is on a northeast-facing slope, parallel to Baker Creek. The more common trees seen here are American holly, black gum, white oak, dogwood, pawpaw, chalk maple and eastern redbud. Yaupon holly and deciduous holly also occur along the trail.

Harris Creek Terrace

Where Baker Creek enters Harris Creek, the trail turns southwest and eventually heads west, paralleling Harris Creek. This trail is just above an alluvial terrace



formed by Harris Creek. As recently as the 1930s, this terrace was farmed and grazed. The terrace contains mature trees typical of a bottomland hardwood forest. Mature trees such as Shumard's oak, white oak, sycamore, hackberry, southern red oak, bitternut hickory and water oak are common. Also observable along the trail are walnut trees, as well as mature specimens of shortleaf pine and black gum.

Drainage Area

This area is the steepest and roughest section of the trail. The trail goes up and down across drainage areas. It goes westward then makes a sharp turn south paralleling Harris Creek. Heading south, Harris Creek can be observed from a bluff. This terrain is well drained and becomes very dry during the summer. Mature black oak and post oak dominate this area. Eventually the trail heads west toward the Cossatot River and enters a mature shortleaf pine/hardwood forest.

Overlook

Here the Cossatot River can be seen from a bluff. The trail continues through the mature shortleaf pine/hardwood forest along an old road. Mature trees such as shortleaf pine, American holly, white oak, post oak, mockernut hickory, black hickory and dogwood can be observed.





The 3-mile-long Harris Creek Trail is marked with a blue blaze. The trail is scenic, and sections of the trail are rugged and steep. Wear appropriate shoes and clothing and carry water. Please take only pictures and leave only footprints.

1. No littering. Pack out what you pack in.
2. No glass containers are allowed within 50 feet of waterways or on park trails.
3. Only foot traffic is permitted (no vehicles or horses).
4. Firearms are prohibited inside park boundaries.
5. Dogs must be on a leash at all times.
6. No camping along trail (day use only).
7. The park closes at 10 p.m. and all visitors (excluding registered campers) must vacate the park by that time.
8. Alcohol is prohibited on the trail.
9. All federal, state, local and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission regulations also apply.

If you have any questions or comments contact a park ranger or call (870) 385-2201. We hope you enjoy your stay at the Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area.

