

## **GUIDELINES FOR VISITING THE ROY E. LARSEN SANDYLAND SANCTUARY**

Thank you for inquiring about Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary. The following guidelines have been provided for education/outreach activities at the sanctuary (preserve).

**LOCATION:** The 5,654- acre Sandyland Preserve is located between Farm Road 418 and Highway 327. The public day-use entrance of the preserve is located at 4208 Highway 327 West, Silsbee, Texas. A preserve sign is located by the parking lot. A brown Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail sign is located on the highway right-of-way. The entrance to the preserve is due east of the Village Creek Bridge on Highway 327.

The sanctuary was established in 1977 and was given as a gift to The Nature Conservancy by Temple-Eastex to protect remaining areas of native natural communities that were historic to the Big Thicket region of Southeast Texas. Of greatest significance is the presence of the longleaf pine-little bluestem community that once dominated the landscape of the Southeastern United States from Virginia to Florida to Southeast Texas. Other plant communities associated with the longleaf pine system such as beech-magnolia forests, baygalls, can be seen. The preserve is situated on the eastern edge of Village Creek, a major tributary to the Neches River, which flows into the Gulf of Mexico. Associated with this ecosystem are unique plants including the federally endangered Texas Trailing Phlox and the state rare Scarlet Catchfly and White Firewheel. The Big Thicket is known as an area where a high diversity of plant and animal species and communities exist.

The Nature Conservancy is an international non-profit conservation organization that has been active since 1951. Over 51/2 million acres of land has been protected for protection of natural diversity. The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Nature Conservancy also encourages instructional and educational opportunities when compatible with our mission statement. Funding for the organization is through private donations, corporate sponsors and cooperative efforts with the private business sector, government agencies and academic institutions.

- For visiting the preserve school groups usually take advantage of the 0.8-mile Longleaf Loop trail. A minimum of 1 adult chaperon or teacher is recommended for every 10 students. Students may also hike on the other trails of the preserve or do a tour on a flatbed trailer with picnic tables for seating (maximum capacity 18 people).
- Programs are offered on a first come-first served basis and are based on staff availability. The staff reserves the right to cancel a tour without prior notice in the event of an emergency such as a wildfire, prescribed fire, or other major event.
- Buses should plan to arrive at this location by the scheduled time. No exceptions please.
- If the school cancels a tour or anticipates they will be late, they must notify the Conservancy. If a bus is late the staff will wait for 15 minutes. If the bus fails to show up in that time the tour is considered cancelled.
- Teachers should factor in time for unloading and loading into busses.
- There are no restroom facilities at the preserve. A covered pavilion which has two narrow benches the length of the pavilion is available to sit on. There are no vending machines, drink machines, or public phone. The closest convenience store is 1.0 mile from the preserve on Highway 327 heading east into Silsbee.
- School staff must notify preserve staff of any adult or child that has special needs or a medical condition.
- Most of the trail system consists of sandy trails or service roads. Our trail system consists of sandy soils and is in some areas deep sand making it difficult for use with wheelchairs.
- The Floodplain Trail is considered a primitive trail and considered moderate to difficult for some may have flowing water/ or contain standing water. One may get footwear and clothing wet. It is recommended that visitors take a GPS unit, or compass with them while using this trail. Please call the Conservancy office prior to your visit to inquire of trail conditions if you have any concerns.
- Visitors should come prepared for sun exposure, inclement weather and biting insects. Comfortable long pants and closed walking shoes and socks are recommended. Visitors will be asked to stay on trails while walking to avoid damage to plants and to prevent any contact with poison ivy, poison oak, or stinging nettles.

- Venomous snakes do inhabit the preserve and precautions should be taken.
- Alcoholic beverages, drugs of any kind, firearms and pets are prohibited on the preserve. Smoking is prohibited.
- Vandalism to structures or plant life and harassment of animals will not be tolerated and will be reported to the school's administrative staff.
- Collection of any living or non-living material is prohibited. Photographs, creative writing and art activities are encouraged.
- Adults must accompany school groups will be expected to take a proactive effort in engaging the group in discussion, and participation as well as handling any disruption of the group or unacceptable behavior. Groups who fail to follow these guidelines risk not being invited back for future educational activities.
- In order to offer students a more meaningful visit to the preserve it is suggested that teachers introduce the students to the following topics of discussion, or coordinate with the preserve staff member the areas of interest your class has been studying. Teachers may also request a copy of the self-guiding interpretive trail guide for reference, or use it without a staff person. If you do bring a class to the preserve with no scheduled tour, please contact our office anyway to avoid conflicts of group use on the trail.
- The following terms/concepts are used in discussion concerning programs: Adaptation, Amphibian, Baygall, Big Thicket, Biodiversity, Community, Ecosystem, Endangered, Epiphyte, Extinct, Fauna, Flora, Invasive, Mesic, Monoculture, Native, Predation, Prescribed Fire, Reptile, Restoration, Species, Suppression, Threatened, Wildfire, and Xeric.

Please contact the Forest Program/Sandyland Preserve Office for further information or program requests at:

**The Nature Conservancy**

3888 Highway 327 West

Silsbee, Texas 77656

Southeast Texas Preserve Manager Cell Phone 409-658-2888

[www.nature.org/texas](http://www.nature.org/texas)