CHICOT PARK

The Fisherman's Paradise
In Evangeline Parish

by
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Chicot State Park is situated between State Highway 23 on the north and west, State Highway 224 on the east and State Highway 22 on the south. The north entrance to the park is immediately on Highway 23, ten miles from the town of Bunkie on U. S. Highway 71, and four miles from the village of Bayou Chicot. Thus the park may be reached from the west off of paved highways by traveling only four miles on a gravel road and on the east by traveling ten miles on a good gravel road.

Before Chicot State Park is formally opened, the Highway Commission will be requested to pave the sixteen miles of gravel road between the village of Bayou Chicot and the town of Bunkie in order that the park may be reached by paved highway from practically any point within the state. A committee of citizens from the town of Ville Platte has secured a 300-foot right-of-way approximately five miles long for the construction of a parkway from the town of Ville Platte to the western entrance of Chicot State Park. This project will reduce the distance to the park by ten miles along highways southwest and southeast of the park through Eunice or Opelousas. The park will be easily accessible by rail also, since the Texas & Pacific Railroad runs along the eastern boundary of the park and has a station at the village of St. Landry, one mile from the north entrance of the park.

The State Parks Commission has already acquired 5,192 acres, and several additional small tracts totaling 465 acres are in process of acquisition, to be included in Chicot State Park. The largest single tract included in the park consists of more than 4,800 acres acquired from the National Bank of Kentucky in liquidation at a price of $5.00 per acre.

A Civilian Conservation Corps camp under the supervision of National Park Service was assigned to the Chicot area in September 1938. Besides service roads and bridges, the principal work undertaken in this park to date has been partial clearing of the 2000-acre lake bottom, (a great part of which contains a growth of cypress and tupelo and other species of timber), and the construction of a one-mile levee with an average height of four feet with a concrete spillway, along the northeast boundary of the park. The balance of the lake shore is surrounded by hills which have an aver-
age elevation of thirty-five feet above the proposed lake level. Certain sections of the lake bottom had already been cleared by previous lumber operations when the tract was owned by E. B. Norman Lumber Company. Considerable lumber, however, still remains in the lake, as evidenced by the following log and lumber record as of March 31, 1940, which represents lumber salvaged from only about 10% of the proposed lake clearing area:

**LOG RECORD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Type</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>37 logs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cypress</td>
<td>2,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elm</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gum (black)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gum (red)</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**: 5,109

This Commission purchased some new and second-hand sawmill equipment for the lumber operations in this park and the labor and supervision has been furnished by National Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Our Landscape Architect, Mr. William W. Wells, describes the Chicot Park site as follows:
SUMMER, 1940

Its topography is surprisingly rough for a location in the central part of the state. It provides a very welcome contrast to the surrounding level territory. It also has an abundance and a great variety of plant materials which constitute the greatest single appeal of the property."

The principal facilities proposed are picnic area development, swimming, fishing and boating facilities, overnight cabins, vacation cabins, organized group camps, and a comprehensive road system with necessary utilities and service areas. A paddock and bridle trails are also included in the master plan prepared by Mr. Wells.

Section of Lake, Chicot State Park

Sawmill in operation, Chicot State Park

Below—Lumber salvaged from Lake bottom, Chicot State Park

It is proposed to open the public picnic grounds and, if possible, a unit of the organized group camp by the Spring of 1941.

The topography of Chicot State Park is very unusual owing to the fact that numerous fingers or miniature peninsulas jut out into the lake. This produces a shore-line of approximately forty miles, whereas the length of the lake from north to south in a straight line is about four miles and the average width from east to west is slightly over one mile.

Besides the unusual beauty of the scenery in Chicot State Park, the 2000-
acre lake will be one of the finest fishing spots in the South. This statement is substantiated by the following report of Mr. Willis King, Associate Wildlife Technician of National Park Service, dated May 31, 1939:

"Chicot State Park, Louisiana SP-6, in Evangeline Parish, is one of the finest natural areas which the National Park Service has had opportunity to develop. This memorandum is intended to describe some of the wildlife features which distinguish this recently acquired park.

Two major forest types characterize the area, one is the upland hardwoods, which clothe the low ridges. This forest has been selectively cut, but has largely recovered to the point where this cannot be easily detected. The climax is an oak-hickory forest, whose trees are of large size. White oak, chestnut oak, southern red oak, shell bark hickory, bitternut hickory, hop-hornebeam, and basswood are principal members of the stand. On the short slopes from the ridges to the bottom lands, American beech and evergreen magnolia are conspicuous additions to the stand. This composition gives a forest which is unusually beautiful and entirely unexpected at the southern latitude. The hardwoods have followed down the Mississippi and ascended its tributaries to form in this section of Louisiana, south of the long leaf pine belt, forests of exceptional biological interest. The most striking feature is the appearance of these hardwood trees, created by their draperies of Spanish moss. In some places the understory is dense; in others, it is fairly open with a good cover of grasses and sedges.

"Magnificent stands of cypress originally covered the swampy bottom lands. These have been cut, but in many places the logs were unable to remove the timber. The ground was found to be so soft that equipment could not be employed in some parts of the lowlands, and there is a tangle of cypress logs which were not removed. Tupelo gum, swamp black gum and swamp red maple have made rapid growth since the cypress was cut. In some arms of the swamp there are promising stands of young cypress."

One of the features of the park will be a lake of about 2,000 acres. The length of the dam is impressive and a record in CCC projects. Nearly all the cut-over cypress lands will be flooded. Preparing the lake basin is a tremendous undertaking in itself. Many of the big cypress trees were cut as much as 12 feet above their bases, and these stumps must be recut below the expected water level. Some of the good cypress logs will be salvaged when it is possible to get them out. Some of the arms of the lake will of necessity be left as they now are, a tangle of logs, stumps and young gum trees. The stands of young cypress will be left, and the depth of water will not be adverse to them. This lake will be unexcelled as a wildlife refuge and for fishing. There are no developments planned for one entire side of the lake, and none should be undertaken there. There is an ample brood stock of minnows, and several members of the sunfish family, including largemouthed blackbass and bream, catfish, and killifishes. Excellent fishing should be obtained without any stocking or lake improvements. Food and cover now abound in the shallow water of the bayou which will be flooded only a few feet.

Ducks, herons, shorebirds, and a host of other water loving birds and mammals will find unexcelled conditions at Chicot State Park. Deer and turkeys would thrive on the uplands and if enough land is acquired to provide adequate range, they could be stocked. Otter are thought to occur, and the presence of alligators is a possibility.

Chicot State Park has a long development program ahead. It offers exceptional opportunities for aiding wildlife as well as for recreation and scientific study. These functions can be coordinated on this area without serious conflict, and none should be neglected or disregarded in planning the program. This park ranks at or near the top as an area where wildlife interest is paramount.

FIFTH COLUMN AIDED BY FOREST FIRES

Jackson, Miss.—Secretary of Agriculture Wallace said in discussing our national defense program: "The forests of the United States are making large contributions to national defense. But the nation has not provided adequately for the defense of the forests. "Defense preparations create enormous demands for forest products" he continued. "Among them are lumber, plywood, pulp, naval stores, and plastics and the pressure in an emergency is to overcut the most accessible timber stands."

Since the forests do play such an important part in our national defense and forest fires take such a toll, it is felt that every fire allowed to burn in Mississippi might be likened to assisting the fifth column movement. Since the first of the year, 4,001 fires have occurred and 2,126 of them were incendiary or deliberately set, according to A. K. Dexter, chief of forest fire control for the Mississippi Forest Service. "We realize," states Mr. Dexter, "that the majority of these incendiary fires are not set with the thought of assisting a foreign government but since wood fires cause so much damage it is apparent that we are playing into the hands of the fifth columnists. This forestry part of our national defense can be greatly strengthened by the elimination of the man-caused fires occurring in Mississippi each year."

SPAWN WITH THE WIND

Despite intense scientific investigation and speculation, nothing is known of the spawning of the saffish and his cousins, the several species of swordfish. Neither saffish nor swordfish are ever caught in a spawning condition. Furthermore, it is a rare occasion when a saffish under three feet long is caught. Where they spawn is still one of the greatest mysteries of the ocean. Fishing contests, held on Florida's East Coast, in which prizes are awarded for the smallest saffish caught, have rarely produced a sail under three feet.

Where the swordfish spawn and where the young swordfish spend their time is also unknown.—From the American Wildlife Institute.

The English sparrow is not English and neither is it a sparrow. It belongs to the family of weaver birds. It ranks among the least popular of all birds and is now found everywhere.