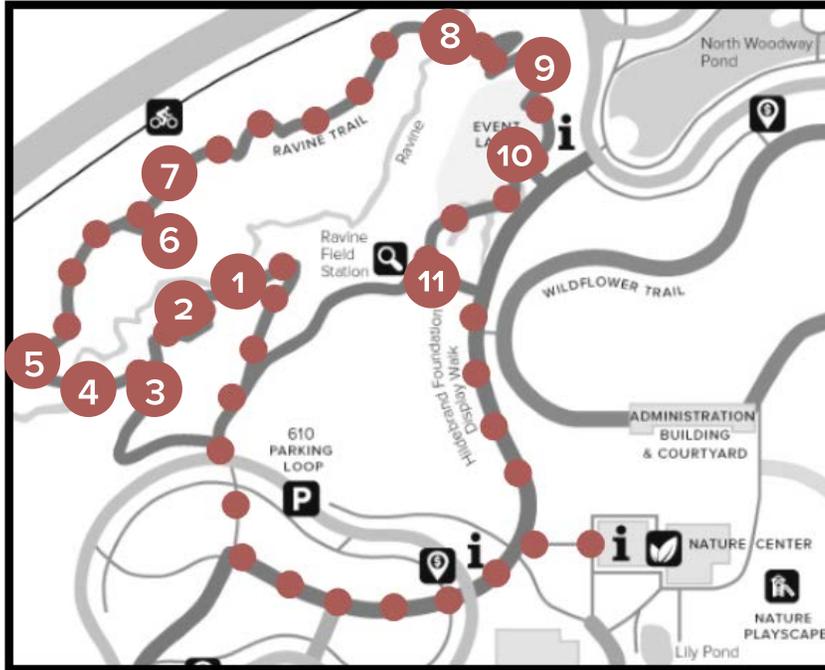


HABITAT HIKE: RAVINE

About the hike

This self-guided hike should take about 30-40 minutes. The path is a mixture of mulch, boardwalk, and bridges. Distance: 0.7 mile.

A ravine is a long, steep-sided channel formed by flowing water. Our ravine is just one piece of the Buffalo Bayou watershed (an area where all rainfall collects and drains to a common waterway). The shady, wet slopes provide a cool sanctuary from the heat and noise of the city, but they also provide wildlife habitat and flood control.



2 Meandering Deck

The path of a natural stream is rarely straight and always dynamic. Here is the perfect place to look down at the winding channel. One curve has a small “beach.” This is the inner side of the channel that grows as sediments drop out of the water. The outer curve is eaten away (eroded) by the current. During the dry months of summer, the stream stops flowing, but water remains in a few permanent pools.

BEING IN NATURE
Being part of the natural world means taking responsibility for our environment, for ourselves, and for each other. Slow down for nature - no jogging or biking. Look and listen, but stay on the trails. Leave no trace - carry out what you carry in. Leash and clean up after pets. Be kind and stay safe!

1 Bottomland Giant

This sycamore tree with broad, maple-like leaves is a Harris County champion at 120 ft. tall. Higher up, the bark sheds in big sheets leaving the trunk smooth and pale. In the fall, look for the round seed balls hanging high in the branches. The seeds are a favorite of goldfinches and chickadees. You might spot piles of the brown seed fluff on the ground beneath the tree.

3 Bee Tree



Before you walk up the last small flight of stairs, look to your left at a graceful basswood tree (it has heart-shaped leaves and a curved trunk). They are only found in the deep, rich soils of river bottoms and creeks. The tiny, sweetly scented flowers are a favorite of bees. Listen for their gentle buzz from April to June.

4 Roots Rock

Look down the slope before you walk onto the bridge. The plants you see are vital to the health of the ravine. Roots fan out from trunks and stems to hold onto the banks. This prevents soil from slumping into the stream and blocking water flow. Bald cypress and river birch hold soil in place even during floods.



5 *Ravine Restoration*

The south bridge you are walking on was built during a major restoration project. Our Conservation Team restored the ravine to enhance its beauty and ability to handle disturbances like floods. They placed tree trunks in the stream to slow water and lined the banks with boulders to prevent floods from eating away the soil.

6 *Overlook Point*

Step out on this spit of land. Years of rainfall have eroded the ground on both sides. Directly across from you is a massive sycamore. The central trunk broke off many years ago leaving a hollow in the tree. It is a great hiding place for animals.



7 *One Tough Tree*

Look for the orange bark on the trunk of the Osage orange. Osage Indians made their bows from the wood. The thorny branches also make a natural “barbed wire” fence.

8 *Who's Watching You?*

Walk out onto the north bridge and you may notice a large set of eyes staring back. The Great Horned Owl is one of many nocturnal species at the Arboretum. Painted in late 2019 by Anat Ronen, the mural serves as a reminder that we share our city with animals that we rarely see.



9 *Houston Hills*

Follow the trail as it rises up the banks on one of our rare hills. The path zig-zags up the slope to ease the incline. The change of elevation may not seem dramatic, but it is enough to change the plant community. Redbud, rusty blackhaw, and box elder prefer the well-drained soils at the top of the hill.

10 *Event Lawn*

Continue on the smaller path that turns into a curvy wooden boardwalk over our Event Lawn. Even this lawn is part of the local watershed. Rain fills the shallow ponds, and then spills out and down the slope into the ravine.



11 *Ravine Field Station*

Stop at this shelter perched on the rim of the ravine to learn more about this fascinating ecosystem. From here you can see the tops of the trees, giving you a unique view of the birds that migrate through every spring and fall. Listen for the songs of warblers, the drum of woodpeckers, and the harsh cawing of crows.



Enjoy these curated musical selections as you walk the Ravine Habitat Hike. Each piece of music was selected to complement the ecosystem and features of this hike.



**BECOME A MEMBER, VOLUNTEER,
AND SIGN UP FOR EVENTS AT:**
www.houstonarboretum.org

