



**TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS
CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER
VARNER-HOGG PLANTATION
STATE HISTORIC SITE**

**RESILIENCE:
THE LAND COMES BACK**



Texas Master Naturalists Cradle of Texas Chapter - Team 2 November 17, 2004			
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VARNER-HOGG PLANTATION STATE HISTORIC SITE CULTURAL HISTORY

- 1821: Mexico achieved independence from Spain. What is now Texas became part of the Mexican State of Coahuila y Tehas.
- 1821: Moses Austin acquired (from the Mexican Government) an "Empresario Grant" authorizing him to settle 300 families in Coahuila y Tehas. He died a few months later, leaving his son Stephen F. Austin to take charge of the project.



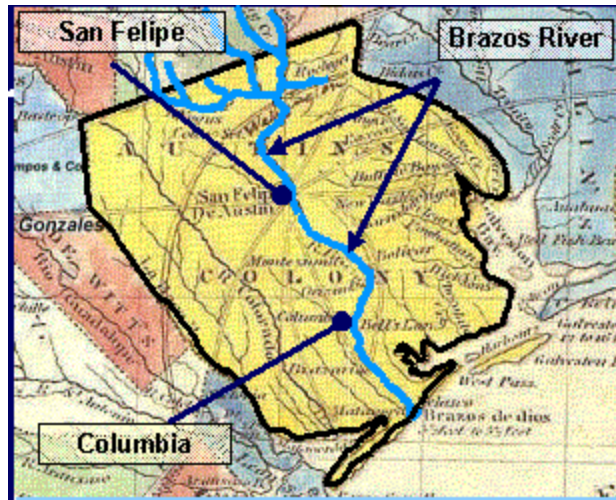
*Painting of Moses Austin; artist unknown.
Brazoria County Historical Museum.
<http://www.bchm.org/photos/p371.html>*

- 1823: Stephen Austin received permission from the Mexican government to proceed with his father's Empresario Grant. He eventually settled 297 families, known to this day as the "Old Three Hundred."



*Painting of Stephen F. Austin; Artist unknown
Brazoria County Historical Museum.
<http://www.bchm.org/photos/p375.html>*

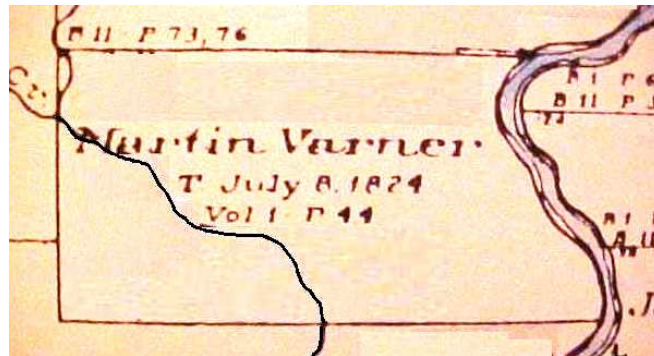
Austin established his colony along the Gulf of Mexico, between Matagorda Bay and Galveston Bay, and extending several miles inland.



Austin's Colony after 1823.

*Austin Colony and Surroundings Coahuila y Tejas. Sons of DeWitt Colony Texas.
<http://www.tamu.edu/ccbn/dewitt/co&texmaps.htm>*

1824: Martin Varner acquired (from Stephen Austin) a grant of one league (4,428.4 acres) of land on the west bank of the Brazos River. He established a plantation, farmed corn, raised livestock, and built a cabin on the creek bank. He also built a distillery; in 1829, he sent a bottle of rum to Stephen F. Austin, who credited him with making the first "ardent spirits" in the colony.



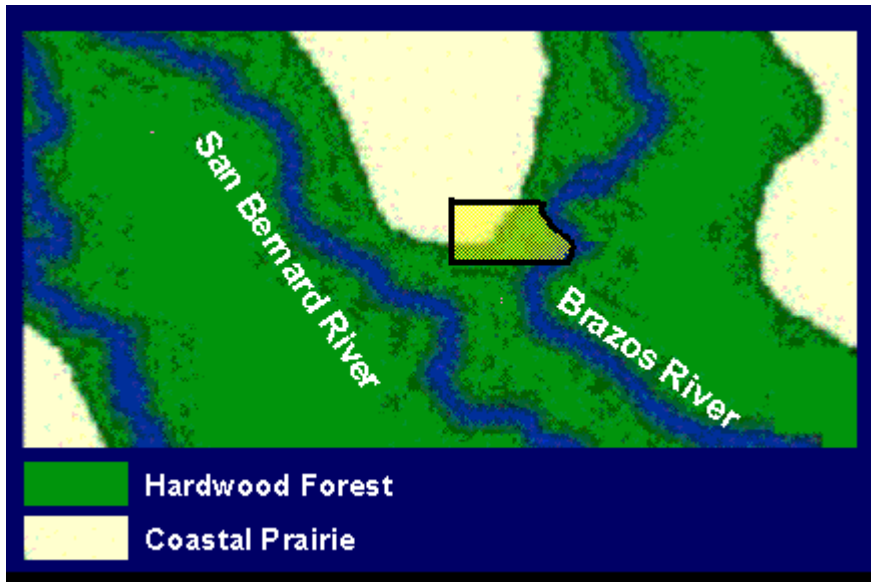
Map of Martin Varner's one-league grant

Map source: BRAZORIA CO. Texas Land Office, August 19, 1947.

Photograph of a print of the map on display at the Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton.

Mexican land grants were measured using old Spanish units called "varas" and "leagues." Under Texas law, one vara = 33.333 inches, and one league = 5,000 varas square = 13,889 feet square = 4,428.4 acres.

Martin Varner 's grant is located on the western bank of the Brazos River. Based on our research, we believe that the grant lies overlaps two ecological areas: the hardwood forest of the Columbia Bottomland and Coastal Prairie.



*Map of Martin Varner's one-league grant
 Base map: Critical Columbia Bottomlands Habitat.
 Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.
http://www.gcbo.org/critical_columbia.html*

1834: Columbus R. Patton purchased the plantation from Varner for \$13,000. With members of his family and several slaves, he constructed a house on the site of the original Varner cabin, and developed the surrounding lands into a sugar plantation with a barn, stables, smokehouse, slave quarters, and a sugar house for the extraction of sugar from sugar cane. The remains of some of these structures can be seen at the Historic Site.



*Foundation of Columbus Patton's sugar house
 Sugar is obtained from sugar cane by extracting juices from the center of the cane and concentrating it in a series of evaporation kettles.*

1836: The Texas Revolution ended with Sam Houston's victory over the Mexican army led by Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21. The Republic of Texas was established, and the first Congress was convened at [West] Columbia in October. Sam Houston became Governor and Stephen F. Austin became Secretary of State.



*Photograph of Sam Houston.
Brazoria County Historical Museum.
<http://www.bchm.org/photos/p2424.html>*

1845: Texas was admitted as a state of the United States.

1854: Columbus Patton was declared insane by a Brazoria County court and placed in an asylum in South Carolina, where he died in 1856. The family eventually sold the plantation. In subsequent years, the plantation passed through several owners.

1891: James Stephen Hogg was elected governor of Texas, and served until 1895.



*Photograph of James Hogg.
Brazoria County Historical Museum.
<http://www.bchm.org/photos/p2395.html>*

1900: The storm (hurricane + tornado) of 1900 destroyed the sugar house and several other buildings, but the Plantation House survived.

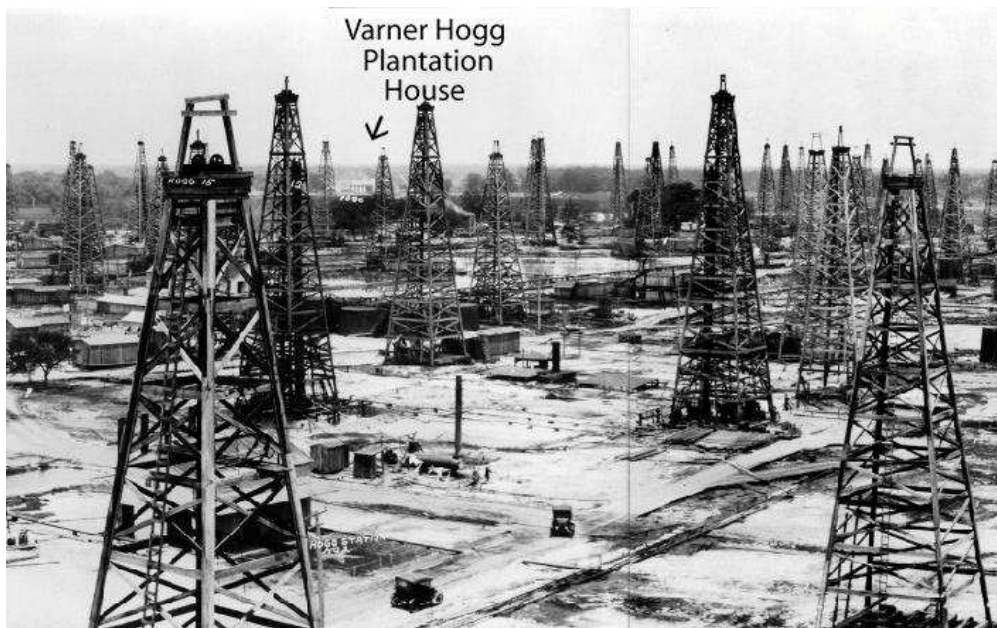
1901: Former Governor Hogg purchased the plantation as a second home for his family. Hogg was married to Sarah Ann (Stinson) Hogg; they had three sons (William, Michael, and Thomas) and one daughter (Ima, affectionately known as "Miss Ima").



*Photograph of "Miss Ima" Hogg.
Brazoria County Historical Museum.
<http://www.bchm.org/photos/p2396.html>*

1906: James Hogg died in Houston. Believing that oil might be found on the property, he specified in his will that the property could not be sold until 15 years after his death.

1918: Oil was discovered on the property, and came to be known as the West Columbia Oil Field.



*West Columbia Oil Field
Date unknown; probably mid-1920s
Historic photographs provided by Kermit Schlameus*



*West Columbia Oil Field
Date unknown; probably mid-1920s
Historic photographs provided by Kermit Schlameus*

1920-50: Governor Hogg's family, led by Miss Ima, restored the home, adding modern conveniences but retaining period furnishings.

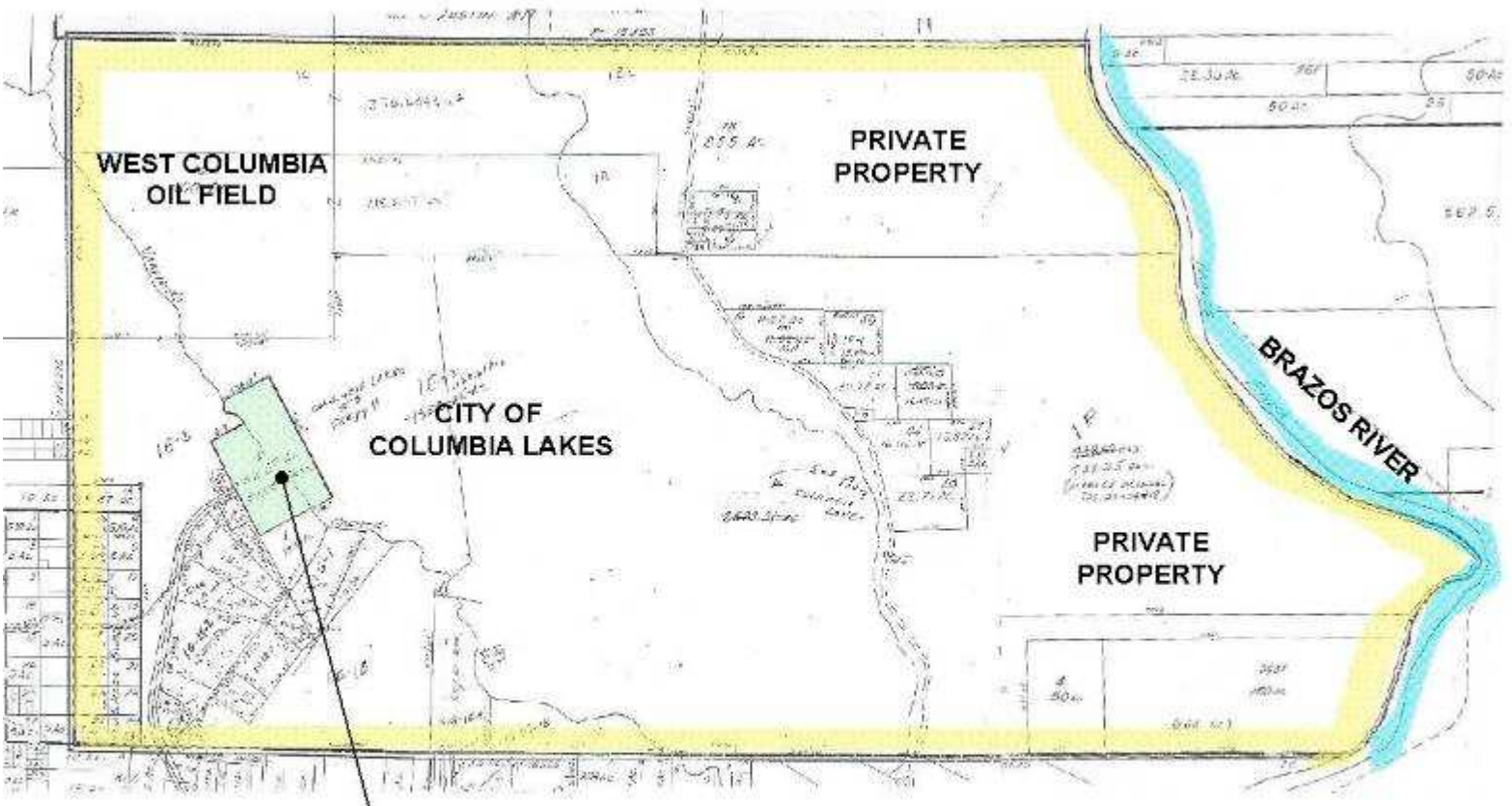
1958 Ima Hogg presented the home and its immediate surroundings to the state of Texas as Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site.



Martin Varner's original grant of one league has been subdivided many times since 1821

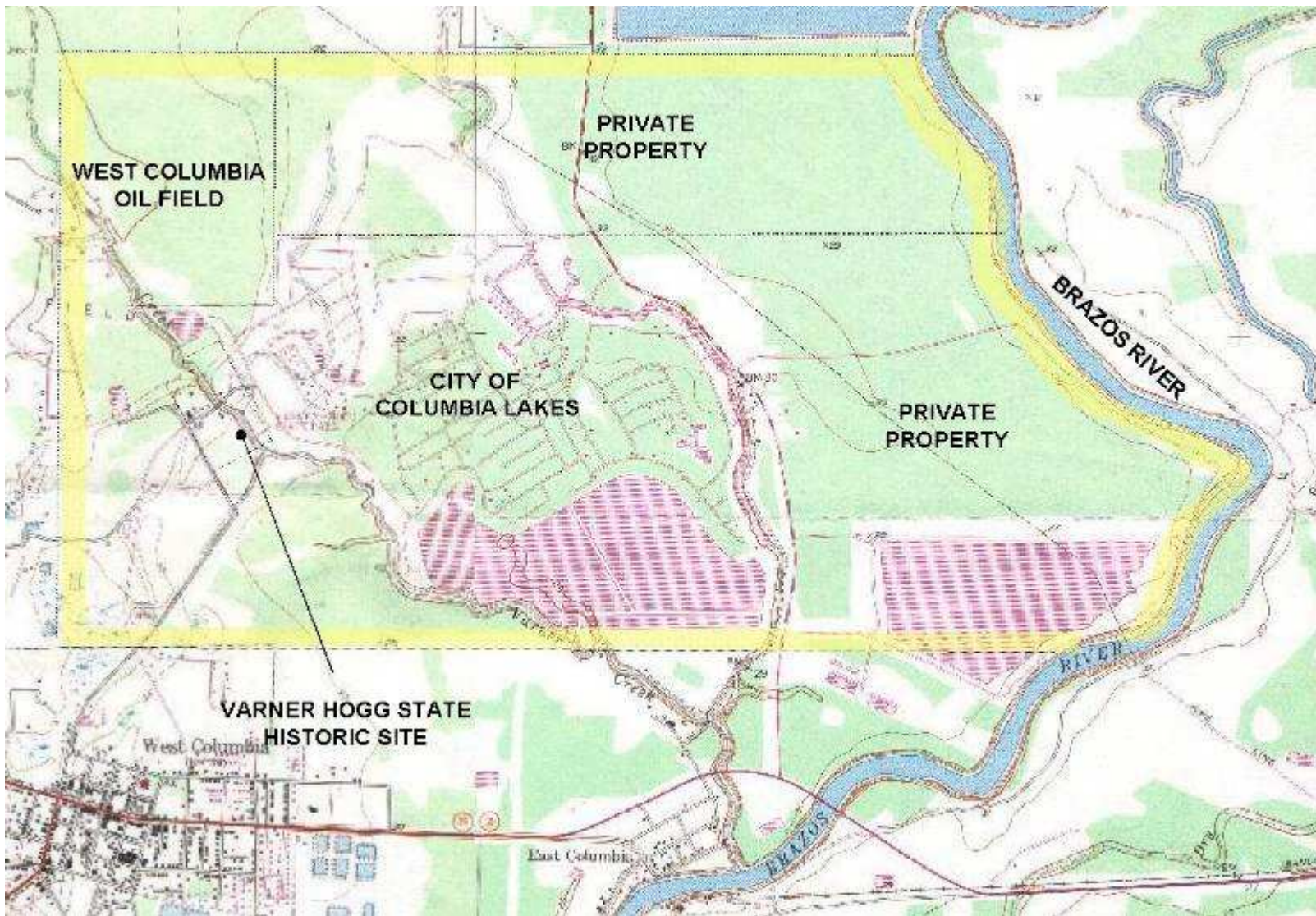
- **The Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site now occupies about 53 acres.**
- **The West Columbia Oil Field holds a 400-acre parcel in the northwest corner.**
- **The residents and city government of the City of Columbia Lakes occupy some 1800 acres.**
- **The City of West Columbia owns a small parcel.**
- **Private landowners hold most of the remaining parcels.**

The maps on Pages 8 and 9 show the boundaries of the property as it exists today.



VARNER HOGG STATE HISTORIC SITE

PROPERTY BOUNDARY MAP
Varner's grant is now known as *Brazoria County Abstract No. 0133*. On Appraisal District maps, the original boundaries are indicated by double black lines; they have been highlighted in yellow on this map.
Map Source Brazoria County Appraisal District, Angleton.



TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Some of the boundaries of Varner's grant are still visible today as property lines or fence lines; however, many of them have been so obliterated that they are not shown on current topographic maps. This map shows the approximate location of the original grant boundaries. Map source: USGS *Topographic Maps* (7½-minute series) of the East Columbia (1980) and West Columbia (1980) Quadrangles. Contour Interval = 5 feet.

VARNER-HOGG PLANTATION STATE HISTORIC SITE SPECIES LIST

As our team studied the site, we became aware of the *resilience*: despite severe disruption during the past 175 years, we found many native plants and animals carrying on.

We also found several non-native cultivars and invasives. Invasives may be ensconced permanently.

NATIVE TREES

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| • American Sycamore | <i>Platanus occidentalis</i> |
| • Bald Cypress | <i>Taxodium distichum</i> |
| • Black Willow | <i>Salix nigra</i> |
| • Box Elder | <i>Acer negundo</i> |
| • Cedar Elm | <i>Ulmus crassifolia</i> |
| • Cherry Laurel | <i>Prunus caroliniana</i> |
| • Gum Bumelia | <i>Bumelia lanuginosa</i> |
| • Hawthorn | <i>Crateagus sp</i> |
| • Live Oak | <i>Quercus virginiana</i> |
| • Pecan | <i>Carya illinoensis</i> |
| • Red Mulberry | <i>Morus rubra</i> |
| • Sugarberry/Hackberry | <i>Celtis laevigata</i> |
| • Western Soapberry | <i>Sapindus saponaria</i> |

NATIVE TO TEXAS, BUT MAYBE NOT TO THIS PROPERTY

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Anacua (Sandpaper Tree) | <i>Ehretia anacua</i> |
| • Slash Pine | <i>Pinus elliottii</i> |
| • Sweetgum | <i>Liquidambar styraviflua</i> |
| • Texas Persimmon | <i>Diospyros texana</i> |

NATIVE VINES

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Balloon vine | <i>Cardiospermum halicacabum</i> |
| • Dewberry | <i>Rubus sp</i> |
| • Grape | <i>Vitis sp</i> |
| • Greenbriar | <i>Smilax bona-nox</i> |
| • Peppervine | <i>Ampelopsis arborea</i> |
| • Poison Ivy | <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> |
| • Virginia Creeper | <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> |

NON-NATIVE ORNAMENTALS (Some may be especially invasive *)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Banana | <i>Musa sp</i> |
| • Chinaberry* | <i>Melia azedarach</i> |
| • Chinese Tallow Tree* | <i>Sapium sebiferum</i> |
| • Crepe Myrtle | <i>Lagerstroemia indica</i> |
| • Ginkgo | <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> |
| • Golden Rain Tree | <i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i> |
| • Wax Leaf Ligustrum | <i>Ligustrum lucidum</i> |

NATIVE HERBACEOUS PLANTS

- Aster
 - Bushy Bluestem
 - Frostweed
 - Goldenrod
 - Resurrection fern
 - Shore milkweed
 - Silverleaf Nightshade
 - Smartweed
 - Sumpweed
 - Turk’s Cap
- Verbesina virginica*
Solidago sp
Polypodium polypodioides
Asclepias perennis
Solanum elaeagnifolium
Polygonum sp
- Malvaviscus arboreus*

BIRDS

- American Crow
 - Barred Owl
 - Belted Kingfisher
 - Carolina Chickadee
 - Carolina Wren
 - Common Flicker
 - Common Grackle
 - Downy Woodpecker
 - Eastern phoebe
 - Northern cardinal
 - Northern flicker
 - Northern Mockingbird
 - Red Shouldered Hawk
 - Red-bellied Woodpecker
 - Tufted Titmouse
- “who cooks for you ...who cooks for yooooooooo”
loud, harsh rattle
“chick-a-dee-dee-dee”
“tea kettle-tea kettle-tea kettle” or “cheery, cheery, cheery”
- “pik” or “chik”
“fee-bee”
“teacher, teacher” or “purty-purty-purty”
loud, clear “kleeyah”, also ringing “wik-wik-wik”
several repeats of other birds’ calls.
- “chiff-chiff”
a whistled “peeto-peeto-peeto” or “peter-peter”

REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS

- Bullfrog
 - Five-lined Skink
 - Southern Copperhead
- Rana catesbeiana*
Eumeces fasciatus
Agkistrodon contortix contortix

INSECTS/SPIDERS

- Golden-silk Spider
 - Gulf Coast Fritillary
 - Monarch Butterfly
 - Satyr Butterfly
 - Skipper Butterfly
 - Sulfur Butterfly
- Nephilia clavipes*
Danaus plexippus

INVERTEBRATES

- Slug
- Philomycus carolinianus*