



San Solomon Springs

Reeves County

Compilation and layout by Robin Gary, Watershed Association, July 2022

Water Source: Edwards-Trinity Plateau Aquifer

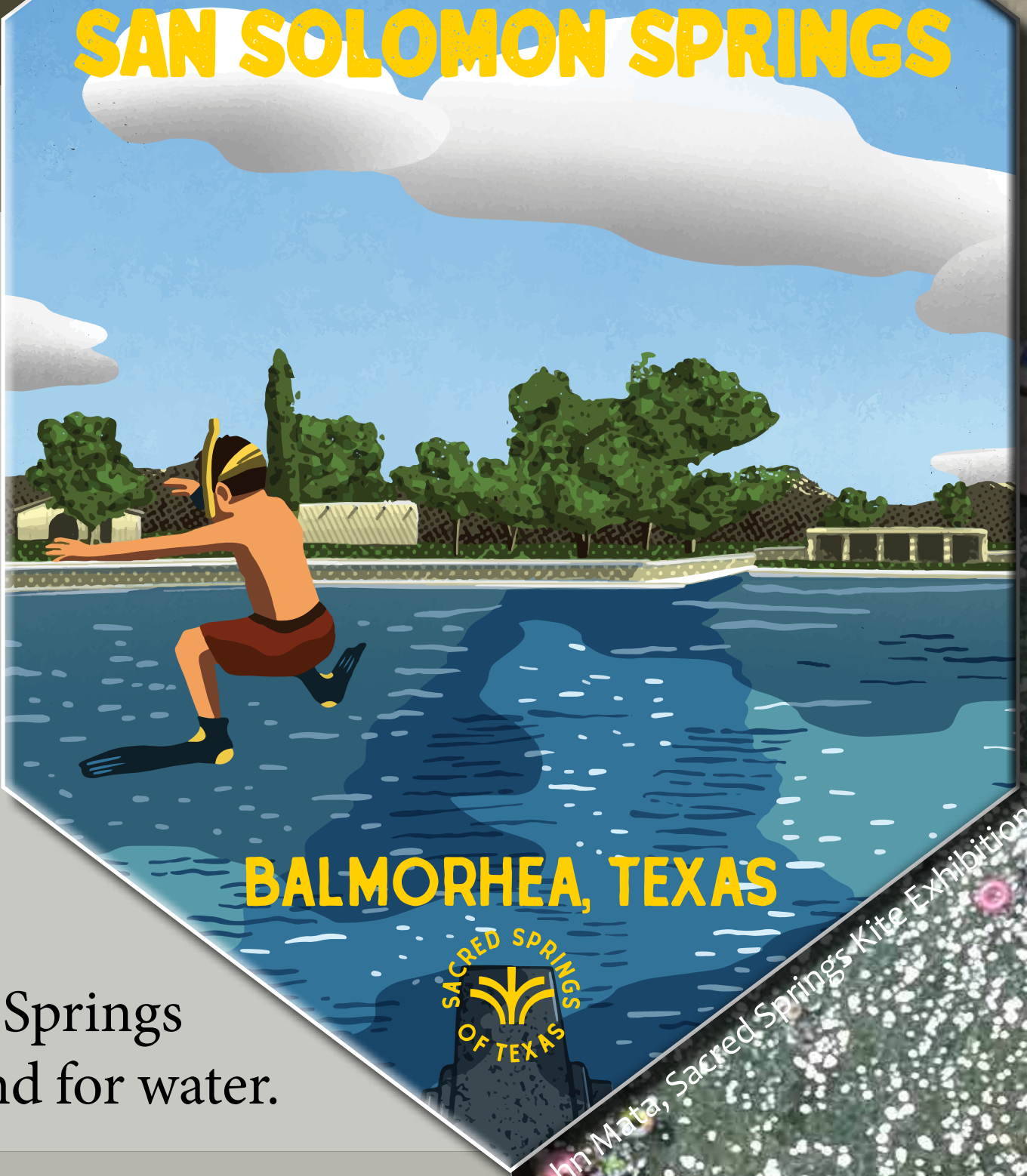
Description



Snorkeling in the spring-fed pool at Balmorhea State Park. Photo courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department © 2022

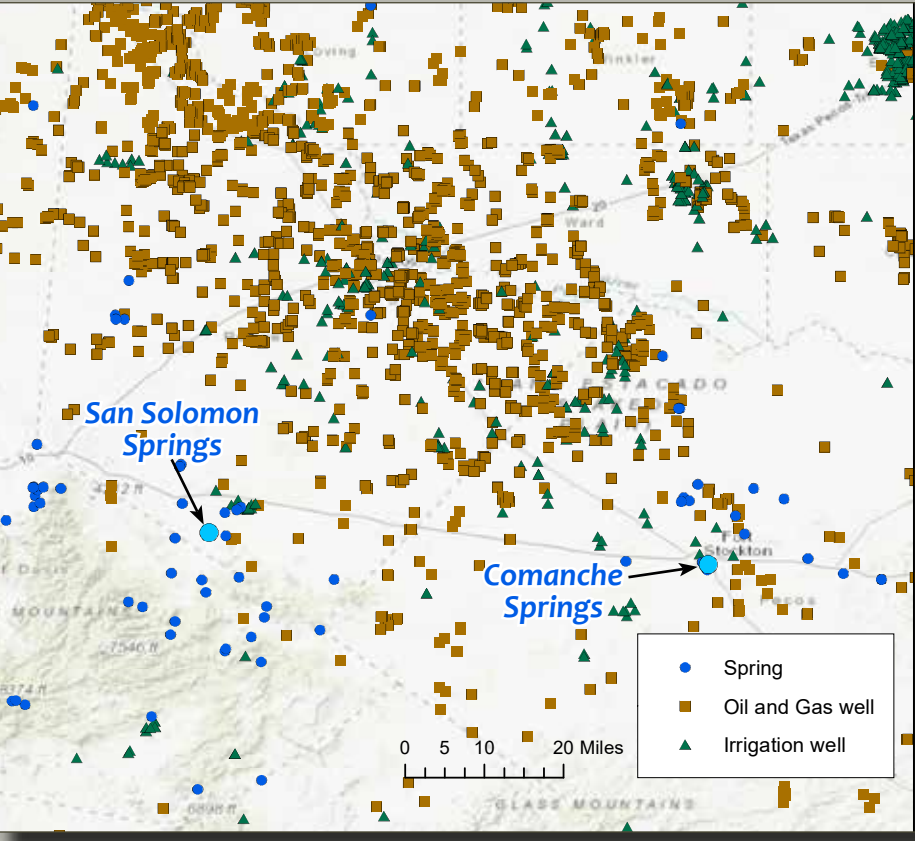
The Civilian Conservation Corps built Balmorhea State Park around San Solomon Springs in the 1930s. Water gushing from San Solomon Springs fills the pool at Balmorhea State Park, then flows downstream through restored wetlands and canals in the park and beyond. Not only does the water refresh hot, dusty visitors, it is also home for several rare and endangered species. The pool is up to 25 feet deep and covers 1.3 acres; it is one of the world’s largest swimming pools. The water temperature stays at 72 to 76 degrees year-round.

The Edwards-Trinity Plateau Aquifer is the water source for San Solomon Springs and is used to meet the area’s domestic, agricultural and oil & gas demand for water.



Challenges

San Solomon Springs is home to two endangered species that rely on spring flow into the wetlands. Historic spring flow measurements suggest that flow is about 10 cfs lower now than in the 1940-50’s. Since then, groundwater-supplied center pivot irrigation has given rise to agricultural production in the area. Wells for oil and gas production are prolific in the region. In addition, oil and gas producers commonly dispose of used fracking water (mostly highly salty water) in deep injection wells. Fluids might leak and migrate into groundwater. Diminished spring flows or lower water quality would likely harm the species that depend on San Solomon Springs for survival. Either of these issues could make the pool unsuitable for swimming and indicate broader threats to the groundwater system in this arid environment.



Spring locations relative to Irrigation and Oil and Gas wells. Data from Texas Water Development Board Groundwater and Submitted Well Drillers Reports. Map by Robin Gary, Watershed Association

Protection

The Reeves County Groundwater Conservation District was created in 2013 to manage groundwater pumping, promote conservation, and protect water quality. In 2016, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department formed a working group of scientists to develop a biomonitoring plan for the springs to monitor changes in spring flow and water quality and to recommend methods for oil and gas operators to minimize impacts to the springs. A USGS flow and water quality monitoring site was reestablished in 2017 near the historic flow station that operated from 1932 to 1965. In 2018-19, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, with support from Apache Corporation, the Texas Wildlife Foundation, and many individuals and organizations, made major structural repairs to the historic pool, hotel and cabins. Ongoing education and monitoring helps minimize impact from park visitors on the sensitive wetlands.



Visitors at the wildlife viewing platform in the restored wetlands. Photo courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife Department © 2022

Access and More Information



Aerial view of the pool at Balmorhea State Park. Photo courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife Department © 2022 (Chase A Fountain, TPWD)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department limits the number of park visitors to 650 people daily. Advanced purchase of day passes is strongly encouraged during the summer, weekends, and holidays, as day-use passes often sell out at those times. No nets or feeding of fish are permitted in the pool. No lifeguard is on duty. The pool is open daily, year-round. Swimmers pay only the park entry fee.



Art4Water is a program of the Watershed Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit



Photo courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife Department © 2022 (Earl Nottingham, TPWD)