

1/11/05

Dear Tush Hog--

I've been noodling about the assignment you gave me -- and it's hard to choose among superb experiences from 50 years of trekking. Maybe you can pick one or two of the following.

Trail-side wonders --

--Looking up: The gold leaves of beech trees with sun filtering through them -- Any number of places in Beech Creek, Big Sandy, and Jack Gore Baygall Units

--Looking around: That miracle of new spring green -- anywhere and everywhere you look -- that gradually turns to summer green-- with the ripple of mayhaw blossoms, yellow jasmine, redbud, fringe tree, and dogwood --

--Looking down: A breath-taking panorama of terrestrial bladderworts on the Sundew Trail

--Gawking at trees: the magnificent bottomlands of the Big Sandy Woodlands Trial

--Bluffing: The bluff overlooking Turkey Creek on the mid-section of the long trail

Off-trail experiences (Wide-eyed / slack-jawed):

Lance Rosier Unit: The sounds / sights while crashing through giant palmetto flats (you can't call it strolling if you're getting slapped around by a wall of palmetto fronds) // The twists and meanders of Kinky Branch that flows into Little Pine Island Bayou // The mossy banks of Yearling Tick Branch that flows into Black Creek // The Old Baygall area in the middle of the Unit // The pine savannahs when the grass pink orchid blooms and the butterworts appear //

Jack Gore Baygall / Neches Bottom Unit: Old Wagon Road that follows the ancient bluffline of the Neches River // Maple Slough (off Timber Slough Toard--actually a baygall, mostly tupelo) -- in dry periods, try walking on those picturesque, twisted roots // Potato Patch Lake // Peachtree Point and the magnificent cypress slough //

Big Sandy Creek Unit: Gin Creek flowing through beech woodlands // Old road paralleling the west side of Big Sandy Creek where we lunched on a bluff overlooking the Creek //

Neches River and the Canyonlands: Leisurely float down the River stopping to explore sandbars and ox-bows // Spring-fed streamlets on the Neches canyon floors with beeches and other hardwoods clinging to slopes //

Beaumont Unit: Canoeing through the swamps and lakes -- a baldcypress wonderland

Beech Creek Unit: Exploring old log roads and checking on recovery of areas wiped out by beetles in the 1970s --

NOW-- that will "larn" you to ask a simple question and get a long-winded answer. Luv--Mickey [315 Queen Ann Courts, San Antonio 78209]