



Big Bend Ranch State Park EL SOLITARIO



TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

The 9-mile-wide Solitario formation was formed approximately 36 million years ago and can be seen from space.



EL SOLITARIO

36 million years ago, molten rock from deep in the Earth pushed upward and displaced thousands of feet of overlying rock. This activity created a blister, or dome-shaped bulge, on the Earth's surface. Over millions of years, erosion and volcanic activity collapsed the dome's older rocks. Time has exposed some of the Earth's most ancient rocks in the Solitario's core.

On first impression, the interior seems to be an unremarkable terrain of low rolling hills covered by desert grasslands and scrub. But the exposed geologic history reveals one of the most remarkable accounts of our planet's past.

These rocks are deformed, uplifted and eroded remains of the Ouachita Mountains, which predate the Rockies. Massive limestones that were seafloor deposits were uplifted during the Rocky Mountain building period of Earth's history. These deposits now form the Solitario's outer rings, called "flatirons."

Viewing them from the south or west at sunset is a breathtaking experience. Hiking through this world-class geologic landmark is truly a walk through time.