

Bottomless Lakes State Park

HC 12, Box 1200

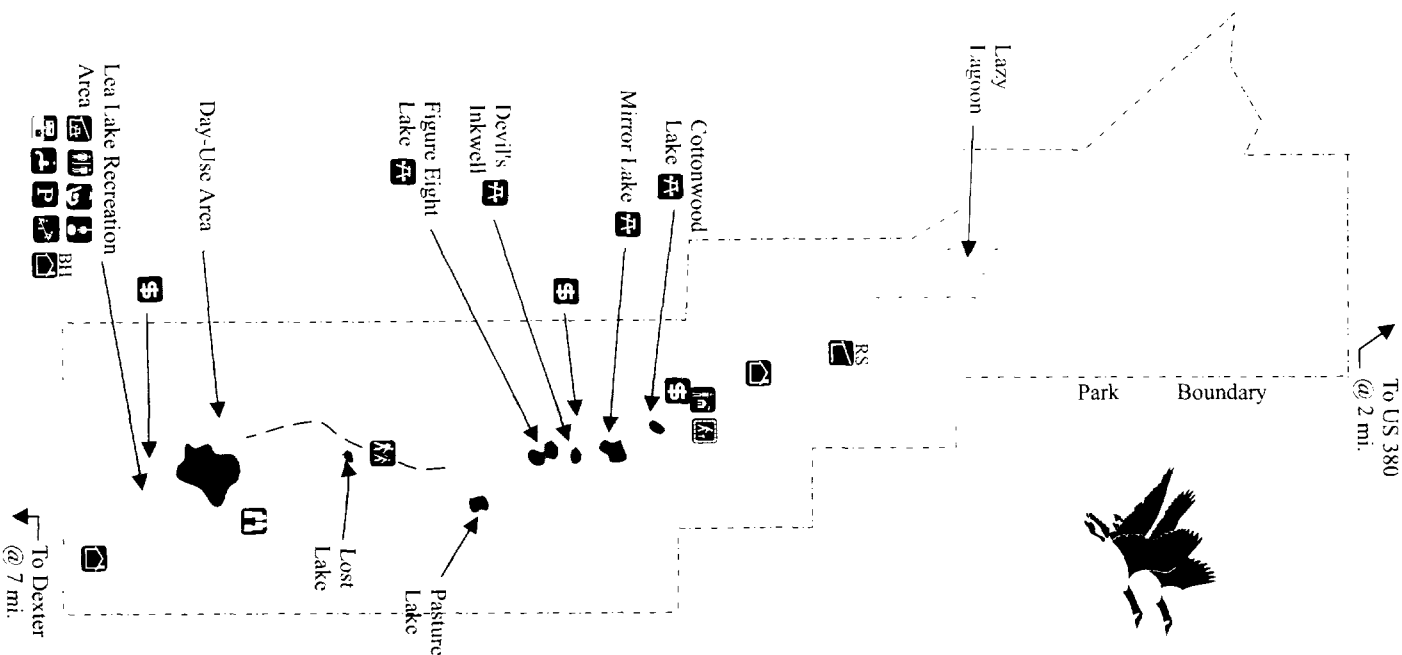
Roswell, NM 88201

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Legend		N	
	...Pay Station		...Electrical Hookups
	...Park Office		...Water Hydrant
	...Interpretive Center		...Parking
	...Shelters/Tables		...Hiking Trail
	...Tables		...Playground
	...Rest Rooms		...Scenic Overlook
	...Showers		...Bath House
	...Dump Station		...Rock Shelter



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BOTTOMLESS LAKES State Park



The beautiful and unique area known as Bottomless Lakes State Park comes as a surprise contrast to the flat country surrounding Roswell, New Mexico. A 12 mile drive east from Roswell along U.S. Highway 380, then south on New Mexico 409, brings the traveler to the park. Dropping down from the bluffs, the road loops around a series of small lakes. These lakes, actually sinkholes ranging in depth from 17 to 90 feet, were formed when circulating underground water dissolved salt and gypsum deposits to form subterranean caverns. When the roofs of the

caverns collapsed from their own weight, sinkholes resulted and soon filled with water. The illusion of great depth and the greenish-blue color are created by algae and other aquatic plants covering the lake bottoms.



In the 1800's the lakes were a stopover for cowboys herding cattle through the New Mexico territory on the Goodnight Loving Trail. Folklore says that the cowboys tried without success to find the bottom of the lakes with their lariats tied together, they dubbed the lakes "bottomless." The lariats were actually swept aside by underwater currents.

Bottomless Lakes State Park was dedicated in 1933, the first area set aside as a state park in New Mexico. The original stone structure at Lea Lake was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934 and 1935.

The area is famous for "Pecos Diamonds" which are actually quartz crystals formed inside gypsum. The soft gypsum sometimes crumbles away exposing the "diamonds."

Primary plants of the salt flats include tamarisk (salt cedar), mesquite, bush muhly, fourwing saltbush, snakeweed, creosote and salt grasses. They have a unique ability to survive the saline soil of the valley floor. Upland plants tend to be more scattered due to the greater depth of the ground water on the hillsides. The vegetation here consists mostly of mesquite, snakeweed and saltbush. Roadrunners, jackrabbits, small rodents, snakes and lizards populate the area. Mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, badgers and skunks are occasionally seen.

The lakes which give this park its name are located along the west side road.

Lazy Lagoon...

...looks deceptively shallow but is actually 90 feet deep. It is surrounded by treacherous alkaline mud flats. The crust covers deep, unpleasant smelling mud. Visitors should not attempt to walk or drive near this muddy area. In the fall, winter and spring, flocks of waterfowl are often seen on this lake.

Cottonwood Lake...

... is 30 feet deep and was named for a larger cottonwood tree that once stood on its shore. The park visitor center is located here with exhibits describing the natural history of the area. Rainbow trout are stocked during the winter.



Mirror Lake...

... is 50 feet deep and was, until recently, two ponds separated by a narrow strip of land. The northern pond of Mirror Lake was too salty for game fish while the southern, and smaller pond was less alkaline and able to support fish. Today, the two ponds form a single lake where rainbow trout are stocked and can survive. The lake is aptly named for its beautiful reflection of the surrounding red bluffs.

Devil's Inkwell...

... is 32 feet deep and is named for its steep sides and very dark water, the result of algae growth. Overnight campsites and drinking water are available nearby. A short hike to a vantage point above the lake is well worth the effort. Rainbow trout are stocked in this lake during the winter.

Figure Eight Lake...

...is actually two contiguous sinkholes 37 feet deep. This is a quiet lake bordered by numerous salt cedar trees.

Pasture Lake...

...at 17 feet deep, is the shallowest of the lakes. Local legend ascribes its name to the one time presence of a flock of wild ducks, although it is unclear what ducks have to do with pastures! Nearby Picnic Dell is a dry sinkhole that illustrates how the lakes were formed.

Lea Lake...

... is 90 feet deep and the largest of the Bottomless Lakes. It is the only lake in which swimming is allowed. During the summer months, the park operates a concession stand where pedal boats and paddle boats are available for a nominal fee. A bath house with hot showers and flush toilets is near the concession area. The lake is spring fed with almost 2.5 million gallons of water flowing through it daily. Due to the clarity of the water in Lea Lake, scuba diving has become very popular.



Roomy campsites are available, both at Lea Lake Recreation Area and along the lower lakes. The lower lakes offer developed camping with centralized fresh water and vault toilets. Lea Lake offers full hookups with modern restrooms and hot showers. There is a large day-use and picnic area adjacent to the lake. The swimming beach is well maintained and life guards are on duty during the summer. Entrance and camping fees are charged throughout the year.

5-16-2002

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Robert Silver mentioned the attached
pamphlet during his testimony in
the Ocean Cases. see pgs 278 and 279
of transcript.