

News from the Foundation

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SPOTLIGHT ON A WELDER FELLOW

By Dr. Michael Tewes, Welder Wildlife Foundation Fellow

M.S. Texas A&M 1982
Ph.D University of Idaho 1986

The Welder Wildlife Foundation has played a critical role in the professional development of many wildlife biologists, including me. Currently, I am a research scientist with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute of Texas A&M University-Kingsville where I have been affiliated since 1981. I hold the Frank



Dr. Tewes with a Texas ocelot

D. Yturria Endowed Chair for Wild Cat Studies, and serve as Regents Professor within the Texas A&M University System.

The fuel that really keeps the fire burning is my work on wild cats. I started the ocelot research program with the first capture in 1982, and it evolved into the Feline Research Center in 1986. Through this Center, we have trained over 20 graduate students while studying 10 different species of wild cats including the ocelot, bobcat, and mountain lion in Texas; jaguarundi, ocelot, and margay in Mexico; clouded leopard, golden cat, marbled cat, and leopard cat in Thailand; leopard in Africa and four different species of civet cats in Taiwan. The preparation and success found in these achievements can be traced back to the experiences, training, and support that came from the Welder Wildlife Foundation.

The Foundation played a pivotal role in inspiring me during my formative years, and later in providing financial support for graduate education. I attended 1st through 12th grades in nearby Odem - the trip from my home to the Welder Refuge was less than 20 minutes. My 5th and 6th grade science classes during the late 1960s were taught by Mr. Oliver Barrier, an avid bird watcher who took his students to visit the Foundation. The field trips to the Welder Refuge were highly anticipated by the local students, and successfully promoted their interests in wildlife.

The next influence from the Welder Wildlife Foundation came from the refuge educator, Gene Blacklock. Gene guided a couple of inexperienced high school students from Odem, Michael Tewes and David Smith, with their volunteer work on the egg collection in the museum. I fondly recollect a conversation in 1973 with the first director, Dr. Clarence Cottam, during the ritualistic morning coffee break. I still remember the awe I felt when a world renowned biologist was willing to speak to a high school student. Both David and I would eventually attend Texas A&M University in College Station and obtain a B.S. in Wildlife Science.

Later, I was awarded a Welder Wildlife Foundation fellowship on two different occasions. From June 1979 until October 1981, I worked on My M.S. degree under Dr. David Schmidly at Texas A&M University in College Station studying the effects of cordgrass burning on rodents. As that project was ending, Assistant Director Lynn Drawe invited me to write a proposal to study ocelots, and I was eventually hired by the Kleberg Institute the year it was formed in 1981.

The Welder Wildlife Foundation also supported my doctoral program at the University of Idaho from September 1984 to August 1986. I used the ocelot data that I collected while at the Kleberg Institute for my Ph.D. research. While taking courses and writing my dissertation in Idaho, I studied under Dr. Maurice Hornocker. After graduating in August 1986, I returned to the Kleberg Institute and resumed ocelot research in Texas.

I began a 100% research position, and teach a doctoral-level course in Conservation Biology once every two years. Many of the ocelot experiences and studies with other wild cats

provide an excellent source of examples for my class. Research on the endangered ocelot includes studies on ecology, behavior, social interactions, habitat use, and conservation genetics. In-depth studies have also examined the ecology and habitat use of mountain lions and bobcats in southern Texas, as well as the other wild cats. The Welder Wildlife Foundation has funded several of my graduate students over the past 20 years.

Occasionally, I am requested to serve as an expert witness or consultant to a particular project or problem involving wild cats. I am also frequently invited to provide guest lectures to various universities and organizations. It appears that I and my graduate students are well positioned to continue adding to the knowledge base for these different wild cat species, and assisting with their conservation, for several years to come.

Email: michael.tewes@tamuk.edu

Web page: <http://ckwri.tamuk.edu/research-programs/feline-research-center>

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CURRENT RESEARCH

Old Questions, New Techniques: Understanding the spatial allocation of behavior in bobcats and coyotes

By Ryan Wilson, Ph.D Candidate

Our understanding of animal spatial ecology continues to grow with the advent of new technology, such as GPS collars, and new ways of analyzing animal movement data. Even with new technology and methodology, much of our understanding of spatial ecology remains founded on untested assumptions and subjective tests. This is especially true for cryptic species such as carnivores. The purpose of my dissertation research is to attempt to develop more objective tests and methods for understanding animal spatial ecology, particularly how it relates to bobcat and coyote behavior on the Welder Wildlife Foundation Refuge.

One of the most widely reported aspects of the spatial ecology of animals is the size of core areas (areas of intensive use) in home ranges. Researchers and conservationists often discuss the importance of these core areas, but there are two problems with the concept. First, methods used to delineate core areas are subjective and might not truly capture those areas most intensively used. Second, and probably more important, we do not generally know what

animals are doing when they are in a core area. Problems arise when we don't know what a core area represents to an animal. Therefore, to imply that core areas are of greater importance than other parts of the home range without well delineating those areas is problematic.



Preparing to collar and process a captured coyote.



Ryan Wilson radio-collars his first bobcat, marking the start of his research at Welder.

To address both of these problems, my research is focused on the development of a new method for delineating animal core areas that is not subjective and has a robust statistical framework. I then plan to determine what core areas represent to bobcats by testing hypotheses related to prey abundance and anti-predator behaviors toward coyotes. Similarly, for coyotes, I will use fine-scale movement data

collected from GPS collars at 15-minute intervals to determine coyote behavior across their territories and to discover what is occurring in those areas of concentrated use.

Finally, I will test hypotheses about what factors affect behavior of coyotes within their territory. A large number of studies have found that when animals forage, they do it in such a way as maximize intake while minimizing energy expended to find food. However, factors other than food, such as territorial defense and reducing uncertainty in territories, are also important for the survival and reproduction of animals. Consequently, I will be studying how coyote movement and behavior changes as a result of supplemental feeding, with the prediction that coyotes will increase territorial defense behavior when supplementally fed. My research will help us to better understand factors that drive coyote and bobcat space, which will, in turn, help us to determine more effective ways of managing and conserving these two carnivores. For more information, please contact me at

ryan.wilson@aggiemail.usu.edu.

Ryan is working toward a Ph.D in Wildlife Biology from Utah State University and plans to graduate in spring 2010. He started working on WWF during summer 2006. He received his master's degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Arizona, and bachelor's degrees in wildlife biology and statistics from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

FROM THE WWF SCRAPBOOKS

From Volume 1—1954 to 1959

- ◆ None of the Welder Wildlife Foundation land has ever been under cultivation
- ◆ The Foundation has about 13 miles of Aransas River frontage
- ◆ 50 varieties of trees & shrubs are found on Welder
- ◆ 140 different grasses have been catalogued at Welder; 200 have been catalogued in the entire Coastal Bend

FOUNDATION DEVELOPS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation plans to expand its highly successful conservation education activities by constructing a new Education Facility on the Refuge grounds. The new building will contain a state-of-the-art classroom, an exhibition hall, spacious, archival-quality storage for our natural history collections, and space for gatherings of colleagues and special guests. In order to prepare for this significant new development, detailed preparatory work is being done. The Foundation is refining its architectural plans, double-checking its budgetary requirements, researching prospective donors, fine-tuning its case for support, and laying other critically important groundwork to ensure the project's ultimate success. A campaign coordinator, Ms. Carolyn Appleton, has been hired to assist the staff with this effort.

We promise to keep you informed as our plans progress. In the interim, for information and to receive a copy of our case for support document, please contact Dr. Selma Glasscock at sglasscock@welderwildlife.org.

PURCHASE A GIFT: SUPPORT CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Consider giving a unique and meaningful gift to friends and family that supports the work of the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation. We have a number of books available about the wildlife and habitats of South Texas and the fascinating history of the Welder family.

*Books by Director D. Lynn Drawe can be autographed for a personal touch.

Trees, Shrubs & Cacti of South Texas*	\$23.00
Broad-leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas*	\$23.00
Grasses of the Texas Gulf Prairies and Marshes*	\$24.00
Empresarios' Children: The Welder Family (Cloth-bound) . . .	\$25.00
Empresarios' Children: The Welder Family (Leather-bound)..	\$57.00



Prices include tax and postage. To purchase books, please contact Liz Burke at lburke@welderwildlife.org, or call us at 361-364-2643. Soon, we will have a new website with an online store where you can shop and pay on our secure site. In the interim, please send your check to: Welder Wildlife Foundation, P.O. Box 1400, Sinton, Texas 78387. Thank you!

Two of the books by Dr. Lynn Drawe

THANK YOU FOR CONTRIBUTING

The Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation accepts and appreciates charitable donations. Your cash gift enables us to provide exceptional, hands-on conservation education to people of all ages. Gifts of stock and securities are welcome. Your donation may be made in honor of, or in memory of someone special. We are pleased to inform that person or family, as you direct us.

Please mail your check to the Welder Wildlife Foundation, P.O. Box 1400, Sinton, Texas 78387. For additional information, including information about donating stocks and securities, contact Dr. Terry Blankenship at tblankenship@welderwildlife.org or call him at 361-364-2643. Thank you!

GIFT TYPE	YOUR PERKS
Cash	Tax Deduction
Securities	Tax Deduction Tax Avoidance on Gain
Charitable Gift Annuity	Tax Deduction Lifetime Income
Real Estate	Tax Deduction Tax Avoidance on Gain
Life Insurance	Current and Possible Future Tax Deductions

WELDER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

By Kris Kirkwood, Volunteer Coordinator

The Welder Volunteer program, begun in 2007, currently has 21 volunteers dedicated to supporting the Welder Foundation's dual missions of research and education. Activities vary widely and include maintaining nature trails for conservation education, assisting with wetlands workshops or the Conservation Across Boundaries® program, gathering research data through the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) project, maintaining the feeding stations for the Collaborative Observatory for Natural Environments (CONE) project, maintaining and cataloging the collections, and even supporting administrative activities.

If you are interested in becoming a Welder Volunteer, please contact Kris Kirkwood, volunteer coordinator, at 361-729-5901 or kris_kirkwood@wildblue.net.



WWF volunteers learn to teach the Foundation's Wetlands Education program

HELP US STAY IN TOUCH

Update Your Information Today!

Has your mailing address, phone, or e-mail address changed? Please let us know by putting "Welder List Update" in the subject line of an e-mail, and sending your updated contact information to Dr. Selma Glasscock at sglasscock@welderwildlife.org. Thank you!

Share Welder News

Do you know someone who would enjoy receiving the Foundation newsletter? Forward your copy and ask them to contact us if they'd like to be on the subscription list. Thanks!

Write an Article for the Newsletter

We're looking for articles on Welder Fellows: life after Welder. Contact Dr. Selma Glasscock at sglasscock@welderwildlife.org

WWF WEBSITE

The foundation is in the process of developing an all-new website complete with calendar of activities, information about current research at Welder, and access to many other Welder assets and functions. The site will be streamlined, dynamic, and state-of-the-art, with updates posted frequently.

Coming in the not-too-distant future: an online store, ability to donate to the Foundation online, and online access to Welder theses and dissertations.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Dr. Lynn Drawe

This will be my last report as Director of the Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation. Kay and I will be retiring as of December 31, 2008 after 34½ years here at the Refuge. Our tenure here began on July 15, 1974.

The years as assistant director, then the past 10 years as director, have been a total pleasure. For a ranch kid from south Texas to advance to the directorship of the most prestigious privately owned and funded research and education foundation in the world is more than any career goal I had imagined for myself. Then, to be able to do research in my chosen field of wildlife-wildlife interactions on a private, 7,800-acre ranch and wildlife preserve, and to get paid for doing this pleasurable work, was more than I could have imagined.

The most satisfying part of this job as director is to work with all the fine, intelligent, successful graduate students with whom we have been associated over the years. The students give this foundation and its programs a life of its own, and they give the Foundation its reputation based on their work after their studies here. If there is anything we will miss following our retirement, it will be our associations with these fine young scientists.

We will not be idle in our retirement. Kay and I are moving to the Papalote community just off U.S. Highway 181 between St. Paul and Skidmore. We have purchased 135 acres of pastureland with numerous large, beautiful live oaks. I will work our small cattle-ranching operation, spoil my grandkids, fish, write books, and enjoy life away from the administrative duties of running the Foundation. I will keep my association with a number of boards and advisory councils across the state. My main association will be as chairman of the Texas Prescribed Burn Board. I have recently been appointed to the Advisory Board of the newly-formed Robert East Foundation, which has been tailored closely along the lines of the WWF. Kay will do volunteer work to keep the library at the Foundation. I have at least 3 books I plan to write: a 50+ year history of the Foundation, one on the ranching industry in south Texas, and another on fall-flowering plants of the Coastal Bend.

We leave the Foundation in capable hands. Terry Blankenship will become Director on January 1, 2009. Terry's 18 years of experience at the Foundation make him imminently qualified to conduct day-to-day operations. Selma Glasscock will stay on as Assistant Director. Her work with Welder conservation programs has gained national recognition, and her forte is outreach for the Foundation. Together, Terry and Selma make a perfect team to conduct the Foundation's activities.

Once a Welder Fellow, always a Welder Fellow! Kay and I will always have fond memories of our time here.



If you would like more information about any of our programs, please visit our website or contact the Conservation Educator conservationeducator@welderwildlife.org



ROB & BESSIE WELDER WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

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