2022 Annual Report
Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation

ROB and BESSIE WELDER WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Research | Conservation | Education

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Angie Arredondo, M.Sc.
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Photo by Bill and Sharon Draker

About Us

The Welder Wildlife Foundation's 7,800 acres of South Texas ranchlands are utilized as a "natural laboratory" by conservation scientists, land managers, and teachers to learn and provide education around range and wildlife habitat conservation and management within the context of a working livestock production system. The Foundation's activities are aimed to benefit wildlife and people and leave a legacy for future generations. The Foundation's mission, unique at the time, was created in 1954 by Robert H. Welder.

"It is my desire and my purpose to further the education of the people of Texas and elsewhere in wildlife conservation and in the knowledge of the breeding and living habits of our wild creatures, and in the relationship of wildlife to domestic livestock on our ranches and farms; to afford students and others interested in wildlife betterment and propagation and in the raising of wildlife along with domestic animals, a place for research and an opportunity for the study thereof; and to develop scientific methods of increasing the wildlife populations of the state and nation for the benefit of future generations of our people who may not have the opportunity to know and appreciate our wildlife, as I have, unless methods of increasing and conserving our wildlife are scientifically developed. For these purposes I here create a foundation to be known as the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation."

-Robert Hughes Welder

The Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit operating Foundation that is administered by a dedicated Board of Trustees and staff. We aim to advance Mr. Welder's vision of enhancing and sustaining natural and agricultural systems through conservation education, research, and management.


Photo by Mikayla Killam

Contents

Credits: Cover Photo, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and "Looking Forward" Art by Cissy Beasley

Looking Forward

A Note From Chief Executive Officer, Dale James, Ph.D.

Friends and Supporters of Welder Wildlife Foundation:

I am pleased to present you with our annual report for the 2022-2023 calendar year. In this report, we profile our people, programs and research at the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation.

First, I would like to acknowledge the retirements of my predecessor Dr. Terry Blankenship and Assistant Director Dr. Selma Glasscock and thank them for their many years of service to the Foundation. I am truly honored to be provided with the opportunity to lead this great Foundation and to follow behind some great conservation leaders. For those of you that may not know me, let me provide a brief introduction to your new Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation. I entered this role after spending nearly 18 years with Ducks Unlimited in various capacities ranging from Regional Biologist and Land Conservation Coordinator to my last assignment as Director of Conservation Science & Planning. However, I am not new to Texas or the Coastal Bend, as I received both my graduate degrees from Texas A&M-Kingsville and my undergraduate from Texas A&M University.

For me coming back to serve the Foundation felt like completing a circle, as I was a Welder Research Fellow from the late 1990s to early 2000s. The Foundation supported both of my graduate level research projects, and I had the great opportunity to live and work on the refuge while conducting my master's research on black-bellied whistling duck nesting ecology. So, it is without saying, the Foundation, its support through the Fellowship program and the friendships and mentors introduced to me along the way, had a profound impact on me both personally and professionally. Since my arrival here at the Foundation last year, I have, on several occasions, had the privilege of hearing past Fellows tell similar stories of how the Foundation impacted them. There is an undeniable connection that this 7,800-acre refuge instills in anyone that visits.

Our cover photo of this year's report is a view of our very own Big Lake, an approximately 200-acre oxbow wetland that was once the Aransas River. This picture really provides a unique perspective and says a lot about connectivity and scale, as this wetland ecosystem is only a small part of the larger land base that comprises our refuge. All of which is directly linked to the Aransas River and ultimately Copano Bay and beyond. So, the habitats found on the Welder Wildlife Foundation and the way we manage them have impacts beyond our boundaries including providing ecosystem services such as filtering water before it enters the river and eventually finds its way to the bay, sequestering carbon from our managed range and grasslands, and providing an incredible amount of species biodiversity. All of which is provided free to all of us and benefits every one of us in ways often not thought of.

In as much, our program activities provide connections to the natural world and have far reaching impacts. From educating children about wildlife conservation and ranching or hunting heritage, to just getting them to enjoy the outdoors, our activities are influencing the future of conservation and mental well-being of our youth. Yes, there is strong evidence that getting outdoors and connecting with nature are critical for healthy child development. In addition, our Fellowship program and support of conservation research not only help inform our understanding of natural systems and how best to implement good conservation to sustain wildlife and their habitats, but we are also producing tomorrow's conservation leaders and supporters.

Many of these Welder Research Fellows go on to work in our state and federal wildlife agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations or academic institutions as researchers and professors. This in turn scales upward with everyone they advise or mentor throughout their career. All of this is to say that I hope you can see that our work at the Welder Wildlife Foundation is much greater than our small footprint in San Patricio County and that we connect people to nature to benefit our local communities and beyond. So, as you look back on our 2022 activities, I hope that you enjoy learning more about the outstanding graduate researchers that we are honored to support through our Fellows program, as well as our outreach and education programs, and how we are working to get people outdoors and teach about conservation. We also highlight our many volunteers and thank them for all that they do to sustain our operations.

Looking forward to 2023, the Foundation will seek to increase our outreach as we aspire to provide more opportunities to have people "get connected". We will aim to increase our K-12 programs, provide more workshop opportunities, as well as general tour times of the refuge and museum. Also, as mentioned in the report, we plan to provide more interactive activities for our young visitors, including the new Bessie's Discovery Corner.


Dr. James and Dr. Andrew Bridges

Other opportunities for the Foundation will be an increased emphasis on growing an undergraduate internship program. Dr. Andrew Bridges, President & CEO of Nemours Wildlife Foundation, and I are working to formalize an internship program agreement between our respective Foundations that would afford students the ability to intern with each of us, thus allowing a diverse educational experience that would span grass and rangeland management here at the Welder to forestry and coastal wetland management at Nemours in South Carolina. Andrew and I were both Welder Fellows and have been friends and colleagues since our time living at the Foundation. Now that we are both in our respective positions, we are seeking opportunities to collaborate and grow partnerships in ways that will accelerate the growth of our education and research programs.

In the research fellowship program, we hope to provide our Fellows with additional growth opportunities beyond just the financial support of their research. These opportunities would be in the form of offering virtual and in-person workshops or webinars in areas not covered in their curricula. These areas may include conservation planning, conservation finance, fundraising and policy. Additionally, we will seek ways to facilitate more network opportunities to help them engage with both practitioners and academics. My desire is for the Foundation to play a role in developing a broader set of skills for our Fellows to enhance their success as they transition into the professional world.

And finally, the Foundation will turn 70 years old next year, so as you can imagine we have ongoing maintenance and repair issues that need to be addressed. That said, you may start to see some changes around the Foundation grounds as we aim to initiate infrastructure improvements especially with our dormitory, student bunkhouse and outdoor rotunda, as these are areas of high flow for our education programs, researchers, and visitors.

In reviewing this report, we hope you, our friends, supporters and partners in conservation, continue to recognize the importance of what we do at the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation and how important you are in the success of our mission. With that, we thank you all for your generous support.

In closing, I ask that if you would like to play a larger role in serving our mission and helping our program delivery grow, whether it be through a gift of your time and expertise with our volunteer program, through financial support and/or introducing us to a new Foundation friend and supporter, then please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss.

Thank you,

J. Dale James
Chief Executive Officer

A Look Through Our History
Past Directors

The Welder Wildlife Foundation recognizes the outstanding legacy of leaders who laid the framework and guided a sustainable Foundation for nearly 70 years. These leaders have impacted conservation of natural resources through research, education and policy efforts and have played a critical role in mentoring future generations of conservation leaders.

Dr. Clarence Cottom
1955-1974
Director
Mr. Caleb Glazner
1955-1974
Asst. Director

Mr. Caleb Glazner
1974-1980
Director
Dr. D. Lynne Drawe
1974- 1980
Asst. Director
Dr. Eric Bolen
1973-1978
Asst. Director

Dr. James G. Teer
1980- 1998
Director
Dr. D. Lynne Drawe
1980-1998
Asst. Director

Dr. Lynne D. Drawe
1999-2008
Director
Dr. Terry Blankenship
1999- 2008
Asst. Director
Dr. Selma Glasscock
1999- 2008
Asst. Director

Dr. Terry Blankenship
2009-2022
Director
Dr. Selma Glasscock
2009-2022
Asst. Director

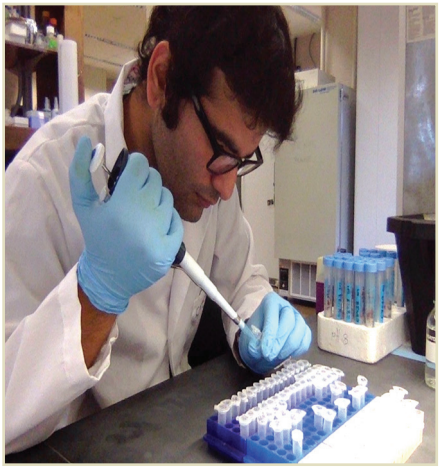
Welder Fellow Spotlight

Samarth Mathur, Ph.D.

Samarth Mathur is a former Welder Fellow who received his Ph.D. from Purdue University in December 2020 under the supervision of Prof. J. Andrew DeWoody. His dissertation research was focused on Montezuma Quail conservation where he combined genomics, evolutionary, and computational biology techniques to create genetic tools to monitor quails in the wild and to help identify the genetic risks Montezuma Quail populations are facing today, especially in Texas.

Growing up in the populous suburbs of New Delhi, India, Samarth had always been a strong proponent of implementing science for environmentalism and sustainability. He received a Bachelor of Technology degree in Biotechnology from the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, a leading research institute in India. He studied the molecular biology of pesticide-degrading microbes for bioremediation of polluted agricultural soils and was awarded the institute medal for best undergraduate thesis. During his time there, he also worked in the hydrology department where he designed a novel carbon nanoparticle-based water filtration system to treat contaminated ground water in villages near a fertilizer plant. Samarth channeled his interest in cutting-edge scientific research and motivation to conserve biodiversity into graduate school applications and, consequently, received the Rosenberg Outstanding Applicant Award in Fall 2015 to start his doctorate in Biological Sciences at Purdue University.

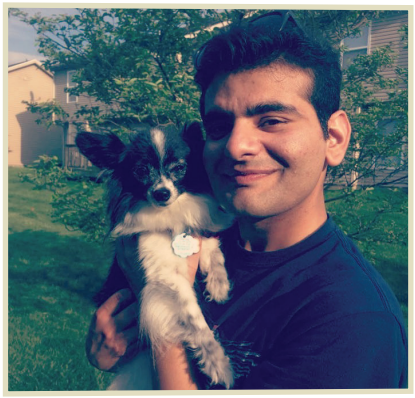
Shortly after joining the DeWoody lab in 2016, Samarth received the Welder Fellowship to study the genetic health of declining Montezuma Quail populations in Texas, which he also presented at the 2017 Welder Wildlife Foundation Student Symposium. “Receiving a Welder Fellowship allowed Samarth to dedicate most of his time towards research and do fieldwork in southeastern Arizona to study the Montezuma Quail natural habitat”, said Dr. DeWoody. The Welder Fellowship program also sponsored Samarth’s trip to present his research at the 2022 Evolution conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Samarth’s research concluded that Texas quail are genetically distinct and less diverse than the rest of the Montezuma Quail populations in the U.S. Texas quail separated from the ancestral quail populations around 17 thousand years ago and have remained isolated ever since. Historically small population sizes, low genetic diversity, and a unique genetic profile make Texas Montezuma Quail more at-risk to extirpations. “ The Welder Fellowship helped me gain much needed confidence in my research abilities and enabled me to meet other conservation biologists who offered valuable insights into the challenges of working in the field. I am grateful to the Welder Foundation for my professional development,” expressed Samarth.



The impact of Samarth's graduate work was celebrated through several accomplishments, including the publication of two of his dissertation chapters in international peer-reviewed journals, co-authorship of four other research articles, mentoring two undergraduate research assistants, presenting at four international research conferences, and winning numerous travel awards. For his efforts, Samarth was awarded the Clarence Cottam Award at the 2020 Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society meeting and received the "Most Outstanding Interdisciplinary Project Award" for his dissertation research from the Purdue University Graduate School in 2020.

Samarth is currently a postdoctoral research scholar in the Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology Department at The Ohio State University where he is continuing his passion for applying modern scientific tools to evolutionary biology research and wildlife conservation. He works on conservation genomics of the federally threatened Eastern Massasauga rattlesnakes. Outside of work, Samarth enjoys playing squash, visiting national and state parks, listening to rock and heavy metal music, watching movies, and spending time at the local public library.

Dr. Samarth Mathur is an outstanding representative of the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation's Fellowship Program and its mission to seek excellence in research and education. The Foundation is proud of Samarth's accomplishments and honored to have him represent the Foundation as a Welder Fellow. We look forward to his continued success as a researcher and leader of wildlife conservation science.



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Fellows Research

Duston R. Duffie, Ph.D
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Major Co-Advisors:
Cord B. Eversole, Ph.D.
Scott E. Henke, Ph.D.

MEDIUM AND LARGE-SIZED MAMMAL HABITAT OCCUPANCY ACROSS A LANDSCAPE MOSAIC

Nonnative and invasive plants are considered a major conservation threat to native ecosystems due to their impacts on ecosystem function. Consequences of nonnative and invasive vegetation have been exhibited across the globe, often resulting in altered ecosystem function due to decreased habitat quality and diversity. Similarly, biodiversity has been linked to ecosystem function and stability due to the positive relationship between vegetation richness and animal diversity. For this study, we are examining the conservation of native animal species across a landscape gradient of plant invasion and the potential impacts of invasive plant management on animal communities. Few studies have documented community-level impacts of invasive and nonnative plant-dominated systems, which is especially true for ecosystems in the South Texas area. In July 2021, we established 24 remote camera stations spaced approximately 1 km apart at Welder Wildlife Refuge. These cameras will be used to document medium- and large-sized mammal occurrence within various vegetation types. We will continue to assess the plant and animal communities for three years.


Photo by Tricia Fry

EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESSES ON POLAR BEAR HEALTH

Tricia L. Fry, Ph.D
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Major Advisor:
Tony L. Goldberg, Ph.D., DVM, MS

Traditionally, wildlife health has been assessed by looking for evidence of disease in individuals and extrapolating inferred effects to populations. Instead, we suggest that evaluating health of wildlife populations requires understanding a paradigm shift from disease-centric to health-centric. This is particularly important for populations impacted by climate change. The Arctic is the biome most notably transformed by climate change. Changes driven by a warming climate include loss of sea ice, increased temperatures, and changes in precipitation. Polar bears are becoming increasingly vulnerable to these effects, notably the loss of sea ice which leads to changes in habitat use and nutrition. Using 35-years of blood-based data, we are investigating the influences and synergies of these changes on southern Beaufort Sea polar bear physiology. We defined physiologic reference intervals for commonly measured biomarkers. Then evaluated how environmental processes influence physiologic processes. In addition, we are using metagenomic techniques to describe the polar bear virome as a tool to better understand potential pathogen-driven risk. Our research provides a framework for how blood-based biomarkers can be used to understand wildlife population health.

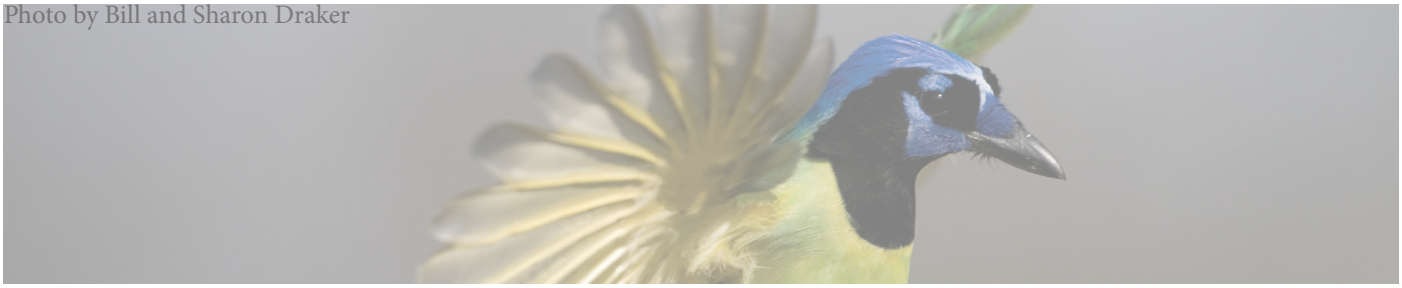


Photo by Bill and Sharon Draker

AVIAN COMMUNITY DYNAMICS WITHIN A RIPARIAN CORRIDOR: A 12-YEAR PERSPECTIVE

Alejandra S. Martinez, M.Sc.
Stephen F. Austin State University
Major Advisor:
Jessica L. Glasscock, Ph.D.

North American avifauna has declined nearly 30% since 1970 due to habitat loss, climatic change, and unidentified factors. Declines in avian populations and temporal changes in species composition are critical parameters to evaluate the maintenance of biodiversity. Our study site is a riparian corridor on the Welder Wildlife Refuge, located in the Central Migratory Flyway zone. We aim to examine the long-term temporal dynamics of the avian community and identify if any observed population shifts or trends are occurring. Utilizing the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) protocol, we will compare community dynamics, including species diversity, from the summers of 2007, 2008, 2009, 2021, 2022, and 2023. Rank abundance curves (2007 – 2021) demonstrated consistency in the most abundant species, Northern Cardinal (Cardinalis cardinalis), however, they exhibited a decrease in abundance each year. In addition, we aim to compare the effectiveness of three sampling methodologies in detecting complete breeding bird communities. Utilizing a multi-method modeling approach, we will compare the MAPS protocol, point count, and autonomous recording unit methodologies in terms of the time of detectability, cost-effort analysis, and species diversity and occupancy. ∧

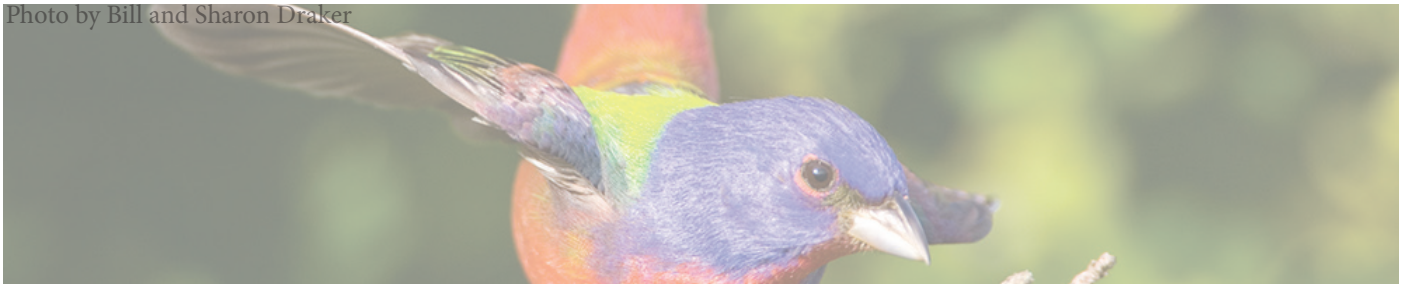


Photo by Bill and Sharon Draker

Michael W.D. McCloy, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University
Major Advisor:
Jacquelyn K. Grace, Ph.D.

RESILIENCE TO SHIFTING WEATHER PATTERNS IN GULF COAST SONGBIRDS

Understanding how birds respond to shifting weather patterns is critical for effective conservation planning and understanding broader ecosystem dynamics. This research investigates avian response following natural disturbances at multiple spatial scales, by pairing local avian physiology and population data with regional datasets. To accomplish this, we use morphometric data and Generalized Additive Models to analyze the effects of weather on avian body condition. Next, we use avian point count data and automated acoustic data to investigate the spatio-temporal dynamics of avian communities at the Welder Wildlife Refuge, in the three years following the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Finally, we use data from eBird, a large existing observational dataset to investigate songbird resilience to acute weather events across the broader Gulf Coast region. Preliminary results indicate that precipitation plays a major role in influencing the body condition of passerine species, and that annual precipitation patterns may have implications for overall population health. Additionally, we have identified two key habitat drivers of avian occupancy in a mesquite-dominated system at the Welder Wildlife Refuge- namely, percent cover of huisache and Old World bluestem.

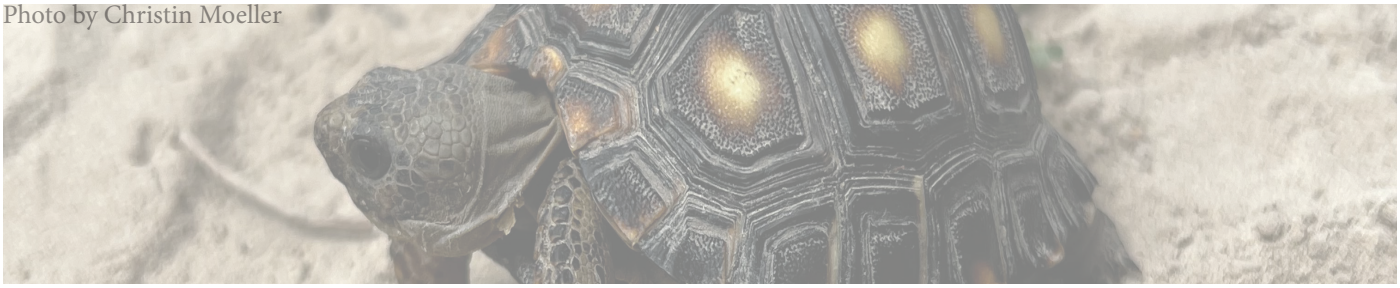


Photo by Christin Moeller

EFFECT OF TRANSLOCATION ON THE THREATENED TEXAS TORTOISE

Christin A. Moeller, M.Sc.
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Major Advisor:
Scott E. Henke Ph.D.

The Texas tortoise (Gopherus berlandieri) is listed as a threatened species in Texas because its population experienced a 98% reduction in population number and distribution. Historically found throughout southern Texas from Victoria to San Antonio to Del Rio, their populations now exist sporadically in southern Texas with densities estimated to be <0.1 tortoise/acre. Texas tortoises are documented to prefer lomas within southern Texas, but development of the area threatens to fragment their habitat. Translocation has been suggested as a possible management option; however, it is unknown if such attempts will alter tortoise movements, survival, and reproduction. Therefore, to date, we translocated 77 Texas tortoises from the Port Isabel area to 3, 5-acre enclosures at Kingsville, Texas to assess the viability of translocation for Texas tortoises as a potential mitigation option before their habitat is altered. We are monitoring tortoise movements, survival, and reproduction via cellular telemetry. After 4-, 8-, and 12-months within enclosures (soft release). We will dismantle the enclosure walls to determine if tortoises remain in their newly established habitat or disperse.

Photo by Miranda Peterson

Miranda Peterson, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University
Major Co-Advisors:
William E. Grant Ph.D.
Hsiao-Hsuan Wang, Ph.D.

MODELING ADAPTIVE RANGELAND MANAGEMENT UNDER INCREASED CLIMATIC VARIABILITY

Rangelands support approximately 50% of the world's livestock, however, 10-20% of the world's rangelands have been degraded and the projected increase in climatic variability poses significant management challenges. Simulation models can explore potential consequences of this increased variability on rangelands under different management schemes. My objective is to use systems modeling to simulate grass and brush dynamics on South Texas rangelands under alternative future climate scenarios and management schemes. My model simulates the effects of different schemes involving rotational grazing and prescribed burns on brush and grass dynamics under present and two future 30-year climate scenarios. Future climate scenarios assume worst case and moderate CO2 emissions and are averaged projections for 2080 to 2100. Preliminary results indicate that heavy stocking rates and summer burns reduce grass biomass under all three climate scenarios. Heavy stocking rates and winter burns reduce grass biomass under the current climate, but in future climate scenarios, grass biomass is maintained. This study could be used by South Texas rangeland managers when evaluating future prescribed burning and grazing options. ∧


Photo by Tara Rodkey

Tara L. Rodkey, M.Sc.
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Major Advisor:
Bart M. Ballard Ph.D.

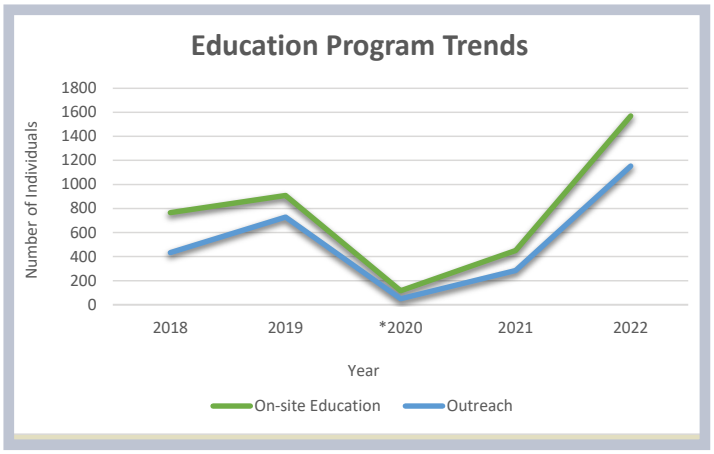
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER HABITAT SELECTION IN THE TEXAS GULF COASTAL PLAIN

Migratory shorebirds are one of the fastest declining groups of North American avifauna, suffering an estimated population decline of 40% since 1970. As a grassland shorebird and long-distance migrant, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper (Calidris subruficollis) is a species of global conservation concern that uses the Texas Gulf Coastal Plain during southbound and northbound migrations.

To identify important stopover habitat for Buff-breasted Sandpiper in this region, we deployed 52 GPS tracking devices across fall and spring migration 2021, and 37 in 2022. So far, this location data has revealed a strong dependency on a specialty agricultural product – sod. Although the species has long been known to use sod, our fine scale tracking data is revealing an even greater use of it than previously believed. We are currently using this tracking data to model the species distribution across the region. Because measures targeted at preserving habitat for this species are expected to benefit many other grassland birds, an understanding of how they use habitat at this critical stopover site is imperative to designing effective conservation measures in the region.

Education Program

Our Education Program is not designed for just one age group. We provide many resources from K-12 outreach and on-site education, university group field trips, volunteer opportunities and training, teacher workshops, and public and private tours, so there are many opportunities for everyone here at the Foundation. In 2022, many took advantage of these resources as we had visitor numbers tripling in nearly all categories, with over 2,700 individuals served in on-site and outreach educational programs alone. With that, we have several plans for 2023, in the hopes of increasing these numbers even more.



We're excited to be adding several hands-on experiences visitors can explore while here at the Foundation. Introducing the new "Bessie's Discovery Corner" is at the top of the list, with additions set to be complete in time for summer programming. We're also looking forward to implementing a fossil pit filled with prehistoric fossils donated by Geologist and Master Naturalist, Randy Bissell. We hope that with some of these additions, and working to improve current programs, we will increase our accessibility to the public, and grow our education programs. A special thank you to all of our volunteers who make our education program a success. We hope you'll visit us here at the Foundation!

A Word From our Educators

"Over the past 7 years, I've been associated with Welder in different capacities, and I've experienced so much with so many people. Working with any age group, nothing is more rewarding than seeing people realize the importance of good land stewardship, and wildlife conservation and managment. We strive to provide a safe environment where anyone can cultivate an appreciation for the outdoors. It truly makes all that we do- worth it."

Angie Arredondo, M.Sc.
Manager-Education, Outreach, & Curation

"Being in the Conservation Educator position has allowed me to meet new people that share the same passions that I do. Whether that has been with the people that I work with, the volunteers from the Master Naturalist program, or the groups that have come here to the Foundation. I have loved how kids come and see the need to conserve the land, before the animals that we love, disappear. When their eyes light up, they smile, and they want to stay and see more, that means that I did a good job."

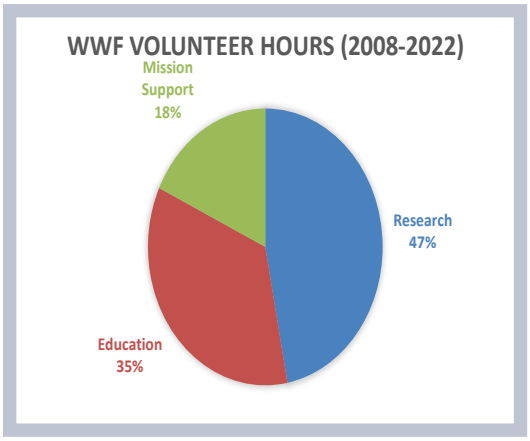
-Monica Cortez
2022-2023 Conservation Educator

Our Wonderful Volunteers...

Over 600 hours served !

Many of our programs rely heavily on volunteer help. Simply put, we could not complete half of what we do each year without them. Some of our volunteers are new, and some have been serving in the program for over 15 years. We also have volunteers in the natural resource field such as biologists, game wardens, extension agents, and more that come to share their expertise with visitors on the Refuge. Organizations represented by these individuals include Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Ducks Unlimited, AgriLife Extension, San Patricio Soil and Water Conservation District, and many more.

There are several categories that volunteers can choose to dedicate their time in. We separate those into three main programs- Mission Support, Education, and Research. The majority of volunteer work is dedicated to research, primarily at the Foundation's MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship), station. These volunteers work hard, meeting a total of ten times throughout the summer, with their days starting at 5:30 and lasting, often times, till noon. There was a total of 287 hours served this summer at the station alone. In addition to the hours served in Research, there was another 214 hours of volunteer work dedicated to our educational programming. These volunteers assist with group field days, lead lessons, hikes, and activities, participate in our annual Youth Hunt, and so much more. These brave volunteers take on hundreds of students at a time most days and do it with a smile on their face. They also provide a sometimes much needed break for the education staff when they've been with groups all day. Lastly, there was a total of 110 hours served in our Mission Support programs. These volunteers serve in archival projects for the Foundation, clerical work in the office, building maintenance, and many more jobs that help the Foundation run smoothly. We are excited to welcome 5 new volunteers to the program in 2022, and look forward to working with them even more in 2023.



We cannot thank you all enough for your dedication to our programs and mission. It is because of dedicated volunteers that we can reach so many every year and carry on Rob Welder's vision for the Foundation. Special thanks to Kris and Ray Kirkwood, Philip Woods, Chad Huckabee, Grace Lopez, Ele Chew, Bill Burge, Stephen Cook, Janie Von Dohlen, and many, many more!

Museum and Tour Updates

In November 2022, Terry Chase Studios installed the newest additions of the Donald Bowman Collection to be featured in our Natural History Museum. Mr. Bowman's latest donations highlight several species of owls and raptors predominatley found in North America. We are proud to have these beautiful specimens on display, and are excited to incorporate them into our educational programming as well as for viewing during public and private tours.

Over the last quarter of 2022, we saw an increase in tour attendance. This was likely due to tour now being offered 4 times a week. In recently evaluating our tours we've gathered some important information that we hope will inform how to better target our visiting audiences and increase numbers even more. Out of 30 respones, 85% of our attendees were 45+ years old. We would like to see an increase in youth attending a tour as well. We hope the installation of our Bessie's Discovery Corner, the fossil pit, and interactive screens in the Museum will attract families to also attend as there will truly be something for everyone to enjoy. We're happy to report that 96% of participants are "highly likely" to visit us again, and we're hoping to maintain these numbers as accessiblity of the Refuge increases.
If you are interested in visiting the Foundation, here are some upcoming events to look forward to.


Photo by Terry Chase


Photo by Terry Chase

Upcoming Programs

Public Tour
Every Tuesday and Thursday
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wildflower Workshop
April 14, 2023

Birding Day Camp
June 21, 2023

More Summer Program Information to Come!

Donors and Contributions

In Memory Contributions

Oakes David Edwards Jr.
John J. Welder V
Halletsville Livestock Commission Co., Inc.

Virginia Callan Welder
Russell and Cindy Marshall

Thad Regan Moore
Jane Wicker

Viggo Kohler Gruy
Jane Wicker

Harry Burt Hause
Jane Wicker

Fred Long
Jane Wicker

Patrick Welder
Wyatt Ranches of Texas, LLC
Bradfor A. Wyatt

Marcelina Castillo
Albert Martin

Rosemarie Burns
Albert Martin

Maria Alicia Gonzales
Albert Martin

Esequiel 'Zeke' Cano Jr.
Albert Martin

Photo by Cissy Beasley

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Coastal Bend Community Foundation
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Photo by Cissy Beasley

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Photo by Philip Woods

Photo by Dale James

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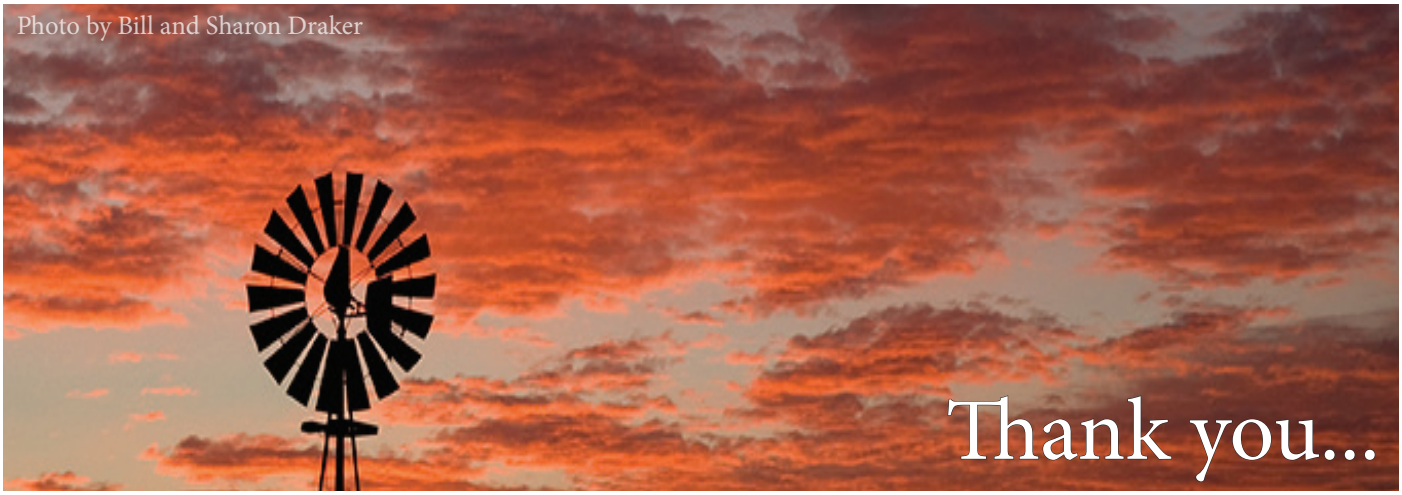

As many know, 2022 brought some major changes to the Foundation. The biggest changes were the retirement of several key positions. Mr. Hughes C. Thomas- Trustee, B.C. Glasscock- Maintenance Operations, Dr. Terry Blankenship- Director, and Dr. Selma Glasscock- Assistant Director, retired after many years serving the Foundation. Over 70 years of combined service was served between these individuals and adjusting to these changes has certainly been felt here on the Foundation and throughout the field of wildlife conservation. We'd like to take a moment to highlight the achievements of Dr. Terry Blankenship and Dr. Selma Glasscock, for both providing 30 years of service to the Foundation.

Dr. Terry Blankenship began his time with the Foundation in 1990 as the Foundation's wildlife biologist. He worked hard and made his way up to Assistant Director of the Foundation, under the leadership of Dr. Lynn Drawe in 1999. He served in that position until 2008 and the retirement of Dr. Drawe. From there he was promoted to Director of the Foundation. Dr. Blankenship raised a family here on the Foundation with his wife Anne, and truly made this place home not just for him, but for his staff. "When you work for the Foundation, you really do become part of a family, and at the head of that family for me, was Dr. Blankenship. He was always there to help with anything really. Education, maintenance, life- anything. I know I speak for many when I say that Dr. Blankenship was a kind, and compassionate leader. I am deeply honored to have worked with him for the past 7 years," said Angie Arredondo, Manager of Education, Outreach and Curation for the Foundation.

Dr. Glasscock began her time at the Foundation in 1993 as the first Program Coordinator and Conservation Educator- a job that is now split into two positions. She often credits Dr. James Teer and Dr. Lynn Drawe for her start in this career, as they were willing to give her a chance. She too, then moved into the role of Assistant Director of the Foundation, a role shared with Dr. Blankenship in 1999. Dr. Glasscock was also the first ever female Assistant Director of the Foundation. Dr. Glasscock worked with thousands of individuals in her career, but one of her greatest impacts to the Foundation was the development of the education interns and educators. Laura Bonneau, a past Educator for the Foundation had this to say about Dr. Glasscock, " Finding a mentor who also becomes a dear friend is one of life's great blessings, and that's who Selma is to me. I recall many hours of talks, getting advice, and yes, sometimes tears (grad school wasn't easy!) in Selma's office at Welder, but more importantly, I remember the unwavering support and guidance she offered me and still offers me today. I am so grateful for Selma's dedication to Welder, its fellows, and to the future of wildlife conservation."

Its safe to say that Dr. Blankenship and Dr. Glasscock had a lasting impression on many who crossed paths with them. From interns, to Fellows, staff, volunteers, and visitors to the Foundation, they touched many lives. Not only did they have an impact on the Foundation, but they also had a lasting impact on the field of wildlife conservation and management. Both served as past presidents of the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society, the largest chapter of the Wildlife Society in the nation. In addition to the presidential role, Dr. Blankenship served as the Treasurer for the Society for over 12 years, and Dr. Glasscock served on a number of committees and continues to do so. They have served on several professional committees from the Boone and Crockett Club, Texas Outdoor Educator Association (TOEA) Texas Wildlife Association (TWA), and more. They have also received several awards within these professional organizations, and rightfully so.

These amazing individuals served the Foundation tirelessly, making lasting impacts not only on the people they came across, but also on the field of wildlife conservation. It is difficult to put into words all the countless contributions they made. The number of “thank yous" that would be needed to recognize their impacts would be endless, so we'll simply say this- thank you for everything Drs. Terry Blankenship, and Selma Glasscock. ∧

Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation
www.welderwildlife.org