

WELDER NOW

VOL. 2, ISSUE 5



History

De La Portilla Pottery

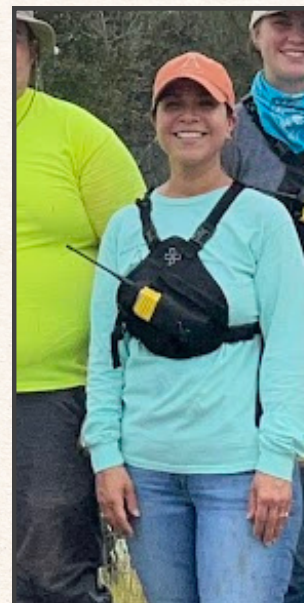
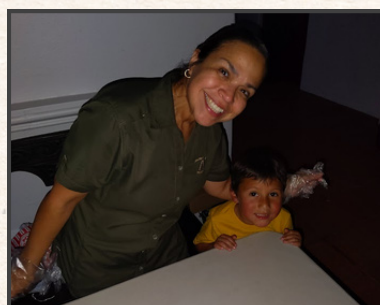
Pottery and ceramics found at excavation sites have the unique ability to date the site if examined by an expert. The materials used to create the piece, its durability, the detail with which it was decorated, and even the type of glaze used are all important clues that can determine when a piece was created. Excavations done at the nearby mission in Refugio uncovered similar pottery dating all the way back to the early 18th century. The pottery displayed here was all found at the excavation site of the original De La Portilla home stead on the Welder Wildlife Foundation. These shards belonged to pieces that had various purposes, including plates, bowls, bean pots, bottles, and even chamber pots.



List of Volunteers - April

Thank you to our volunteers for lending a helping hand with our final Field Day!

- Daizy Silva
- Phil Woods
- Vivian Atkinson
- Sara Rock
- Katie Doyle
- Larisa Ford
- Shirley Thornton



Farewell-Angela Rangel

Angela has been a vital part of the Foundation for more than a decade, and her impact will be felt for years to come. She brought care, dedication, and a quiet thoughtfulness to everything she did, always finding ways to go beyond what was asked of her. Whether she was checking in with others, lending a hand wherever it was needed, or even stepping outside her comfort zone to support new efforts, Angela approached it all with generosity and heart.

She had a gift for making everyone who walked through the door feel welcome and valued, and her steady presence helped keep the Foundation running smoothly in ways both seen and unseen. Thanks to her, countless moments—big and small—came together seamlessly.

As Angela begins a new chapter, we are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and care she shared with the Foundation. She will be greatly missed, and we wish her all the very best in the future.

Events Attended/Hosted

Who have we reached this month?

- April 2
 - Rock Steady Tour
- April 7
 - Beeville Master Gardener Pilgrimage
- April 8
 - Rockport Junior Master Naturalist
- April 10
 - Kostoryz Science Spectacular
- April 11
 - Earth Day Bay Day

At Outreach Events

- 456 people

At the Foundation

- 237 people

- April 14
 - Welder Elementary GT Field Trip
- April 16
 - Public Tour
- April 18
 - Harvey Weil Conservation Dinner
- April 24
 - Welder Elementary Field Day
- April 29
 - H.O.S.T. Home School Field Trip



WELDER ELEMENTARY GT FIELD TRIP

Meet Julie

Please join us in welcoming Julie Peña as the new Executive Administrative Manager at the Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation. Julie brings more than 34 years of administrative and leadership experience, along with a strong passion for people, organization, and community engagement. We are excited to have her join the Welder team and look forward to the knowledge, positivity, and dedication she will bring to the Foundation.



Volunteer Opportunities



Education:

- Wildflower Workshop (May 1st)
- Youth Wildflower Workshop (May 29th)



Workday: Refuge Maintenance



Collections: Organizing

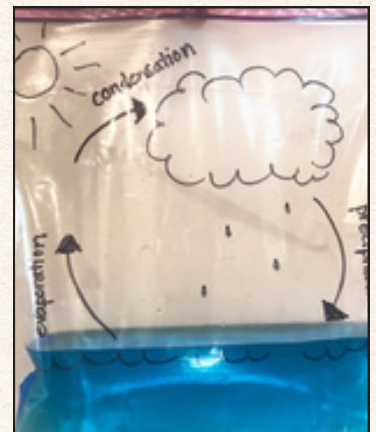
* Join our Volunteer Team!

Education Team

Monthly Outdoor Family Activity

WATER CYCLE IN A BAG

- Decorate your bag using permanent markers.
 - Draw the sun, cloud, and ocean waves.
- Draw an arrow going from the cloud to the water, water to the sky, and sky to the cloud.
 - Label them: Evaporation, Condensation, & Precipitation
- Fill a cup with water and add a few drips of blue food coloring, and mix well.
- Pour the colored water into the bag until it is about one-third full.
- You can also add some small rocks or sand to represent land.
- Close the bag tightly to prevent leaks.
- Tape the bag to a sunny window or warm spot and keep it upright.
- Watch the bag over several hours or days.
 - The water droplets and condensation that form inside.



WELDER INSECT FACT - PRAYING MANTIS

The praying mantis is a master of camouflage, blending seamlessly into leaves and branches as it waits for prey. With lightning-fast reflexes, it can snatch insects out of the air using its powerful front legs, making it one of nature's most efficient hunters. Beyond its hunting skills, the mantis has fascinated scientists with its unique vision and curious, almost "thoughtful" head movements.



Reptile Facts

Uno's Corner - Spiny Softshell Turtle

The spiny softshell turtle is a unique freshwater reptile known for its flat, leathery shell and flexible, pancake-like body. Unlike most turtles, it has a long, snorkel-like nose that allows it to breathe while staying almost completely hidden underwater. Its name comes from the small, spiny bumps along the front edge of its shell, which help protect it from predators. Fast and surprisingly agile, this turtle can dart through water and even move quickly on land when needed.



Joke of the Month

Q: What do you get when you cross a fish with an elephant?

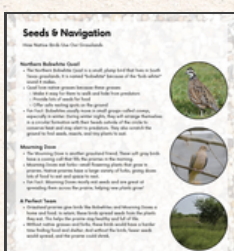
A: Swimming Trunks!

Check out our Handouts

2026 Calendar



2026 Spring Activity Book



This series of Nature Nook activity books explores the diverse habitats found on the Welder Wildlife Refuge. We are beginning the year with a brand-new issue focused on grasslands, highlighting their ecological importance, history in Texas, and the plants and animals that depend on them. This edition also features two engaging activities and a Welder Tales spotlight on the original land grant of the Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation.

Research



Spotlight on a Welder Fellow

Shelby duPerier, M.S.

DISTRIBUTION OF HIGH-ELEVATION OWLS IN THE FAVIS MOUNTAINS, TEXAS

Several mountain ranges within the Chihuahuan Desert receive more precipitation and experience cooler temperatures than the surrounding lowland desert. This “sky island” effect allows for more diverse ecosystems within the mountain range, which support high-elevation bird species uncommon to the area. Due to the rugged and remote nature of the Chihuahuan Desert mountains, the occurrence and distribution of high-elevation species are poorly understood, especially for nocturnal birds. Passive acoustic monitoring, paired with deep learning neural networks, shows promise in increasing the detection of elusive birds. This study aims to evaluate vocal patterns and trends of nocturnal bird species in the Davis Mountains, particularly flammulated (*Psiloscops flammeolus*), northern saw-whet (*Aegolius acadicus*), and Mexican spotted (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) owls. Using autonomous recording units (ARUs), owls were monitored in 2024 and 2025 at the Davis Mountains Preserve (DMP). Data were collected from March through August, coinciding with the breeding season, when calling activity is most frequent. Twenty-five ARUs were deployed across the DMP in suitable owl habitat and programmed to record during peak vocal activity (2-3 hours after sunset and 1 hour before sunrise). Audio recordings were processed using an automated species detection software known as BirdNET. Preliminary results confirm the presence of all three target species within the preserve. Subsequent analyses will refine ARU recording times and placement, identify peak calling periods, and separate calling activity based on territory defense, mating calls, or predator response.

Rockport Junior Master Naturalist



Harvey Weil Dinner



CONTACT INFORMATION



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Rock Steady Tour



Beeville Master Gardeners Pilgrimage



Welder Elementary Field Day



H.O.S.T Home School Field Trip

