

SOUTH TEXAS WILDLIFE



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at Texas A&M University-Kingsville

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Riviera ISD student learning how to hold birds for photography and banding © Janel L. Ortiz

through experiential and place-based learning, where the subject matter is based on using local heritage, culture, and natural areas as examples. CKWRI Ph.D. student **Janel Ortiz** has developed a Wild Bird Conservation Curriculum with 5 hands-on lessons as part of her dissertation research.

The lesson plans are aligned with 6th grade science Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards, but may be modified for use in upper and lower grade levels. The lessons engage students in bird identification, simulating a bird mist-netting and banding station, and entering and analyzing data in the South Texas Wintering Birds citizen science website. Participants also age quail wings, identify quail internal parasites, and classify quail habitat characteristics and barriers using aerial photos.

We have 5 equipment and supply kits educators can borrow to implement the curriculum. Kits include

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAM

by April Conkey

The Education and Outreach Program of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI) focuses on research in education, assessment of instruction, and human interactions with wildlife. In addition, we incorporate research findings from CKWRI

scientists into our programs to help bridge the gap between research and the public. Some may ask, “Why is this important?” As our population becomes more urban and people spend less time outdoors, there are fewer opportunities to learn about our local flora and fauna. Author and journalist Richard Louv categorized the problem as “nature deficit disorder” in his 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods*. To treat this “condition,” we aim to offer ideas and opportunities to reconnect people with nature.

One of the best ways to introduce wildlife science to students is

Editor’s Note: Dr. April Conkey is a Research Scientist at the CKWRI and Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

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By The Numbers

- 2.5 average length in inches of the bill of a common snipe (Management of Migratory Shore and Upland Game Birds in North America, G. Sanderson, University of Nebraska Press)
- 12–21 time in months for male Texas coral snakes to reach sexual maturity (Poisonous Snakes of Texas, A.H. Price, Texas Parks and Wildlife Press)



© Janel L. Ortiz

Students from Sarita ISD participated in laboratory exercises geared to teach them how to age quail wings, identify quail internal parasites, and classify quail habitat characteristics using aerial photos.

binoculars, field guides, quail wings, and a jar of preserved internal quail parasites. Ag teachers, museum educators, and environmental educators from the King Ranch, Coastal Bend Audubon Society, East Foundation, and Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge have joined science teachers in participating in our teacher training workshops.

To date, 6th grade students at Sarita ISD and Riviera ISD have completed the curriculum and participated in our program evaluation surveys. Feedback on the program has been positive, and teachers commented that the students were excited to participate in the activities.



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Sixth graders at Sarita ISD identified and counted birds at a local natural area.

The Wild Bird Conservation Curriculum program has been supported by grants from the Elizabeth Huth Coates Foundation of 1992, the Coastal Bend Audubon Society, and Ms. Leatrice Koch.

Another way to engage people is to use technology such as smartphone apps. We received a grant from the Texas Women for the Arts, with **Mrs. Janell Kleberg** as our member sponsor, for an art, science, and augmented reality project with Driscoll ISD. We are collaborating with **Dr. George Vargas**, Director of the



© Janel L. Ortiz

Students participated in simulations of mist-netting and banding birds on the Sarita ISD school grounds.

Rural Arts Program (TAMUK), and **Dr. Marybeth Green**, Instructional Technology (TAMUK), for the Full STEAM Ahead project. As part of this program, Driscoll 4th and 5th graders toured the John C. Perez Serpenterium (TAMUK) and the A. E. Leonard Family native plant garden at the *Tio and Janell Kleberg Wildlife Research Park* (TAMUK).

My graduate students and I led sessions on the components of a western diamondback rattlesnake's food web in brush country habitat. Driscoll students worked with their art teacher and Dr. Vargas to create paintings of a snake in its

environment and recorded a video describing their artwork.

The finished artwork will be featured in an interactive exhibit at the Ben Bailey Art Gallery (TAMUK) February 18 – March 18, 2016. A public reception will be held at the Gallery on February 25, 2016 at 6:00 PM. Exhibit viewers can download a free app and use a smart-phone or



Driscoll student Katie Ramirez made this painting for the Full STEAM Ahead project.

tablet camera to see the student's video playing in augmented-reality fashion over the painting. The integration of seeing the habitat and animals in person and creating and explaining the artwork helps reinforce the science concepts of food webs for students.

If you are interested in these educational programs, information, lesson plans, and workshop announcements are available on the Education and Outreach Program webpage (<http://www.ckwri.tamuk.edu/research-programs/education-and-outreach/>). We owe a special debt of thanks to Janell Kleberg for her tireless effort on our behalf. ~

CKWRI NEWS

Chad Auler Joins CKWRI Advisory Board

We are pleased to announce our new Advisory Board Member, **Mr. Chad Auler**, bringing us to 19 members that are serving on the CKWRI Advisory Board (see page 4 for the listing of current members). Chad is a lifelong resident of Austin and 6th generation Texan. He has deep



Pictured left to right: Mr. Chad Auler—CKWRI’s new Advisory Board Member, Dr. Fred Bryant, and Dr. David Hewitt—Stedman Chair for White-tailed Deer Research. The waterfall in the background is on the Fall Creek Ranch.

roots in the Texas alcoholic beverage industry. After graduating from the University of Texas in 1992, he joined the family business at Fall Creek Vineyards. After receiving an MBA from the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, Chad cofounded Deep Eddy Vodka, which was acquired by Heaven Hill Brands in 2015.

Chad also has business interests in the oil and gas industry, real estate, commercial ranching operations, and private equity. He is currently the President of C. Auler Holdings LP. Chad and his family own and operate Fall Creek Ranch in Llano County and Rancho Aparejo in Presidio County.

Chad has served on numerous boards, and he currently serves on the McCombs School of Business Alumni Board, the University of Texas Development Board, and the Chancellor’s Council Executive Committee. He is also President of West Austin Youth Association, a privately funded organization that provides recreational opportunities for over 5,000 kids in Austin.

Chad is an avid golfer and outdoorsman. He and his wife, Stacy, have a daughter and a son. Welcome Chad!

Visit our web page at <http://www.ckwri.tamuk.edu>

Grad Student Adam Toomey Wins Award

One of our graduate students **Adam Toomey** won the best graduate student oral presentation award at the annual meeting of the Texas Society for Ecological Restoration held in San Antonio, Texas during November 13–15. The presentation entitled “Season of prescribed burning on Kleberg bluestem (*Dichanthium annulatum*) in South Texas” was from his master’s work on winter and summer burning of Old World bluestems that he completed in August 2015. The presentation was coauthored by his academic advisor **Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak**, Research Scientist at the CKWRI and Associate Professor at TAMUK, and his committee members **Dr.**



The award presented to Adam Toomey for his presentation at the annual meeting of the Texas Society for Ecological Restoration.

David Wester (CKWRI) and **Dr. David Ruppert** (Agriculture, Agribusiness and Environmental Science at TAMUK).

Adam started a Ph.D. this past fall semester at TAMUK, directed by Dr. Rideout-Hanzak. His Ph.D. study will examine how prescribed burning in different seasons influences gulf cordgrass. ~

REFLECTIONS ON 2015

by Fred Bryant

What a year 2015 was. In some regions, it was the most rain ever recorded. In South Texas, it was close to the wettest year on record in many parts of the brush country and sand sheet.

For sure, 2015 will go down as the best year for wild quail in anyone’s recent memory. Those of us who are still around 20 years from now will say “Remember ’15? What a year that was for quail hunting!” Believe it or not, I saw a covey on the courthouse lawn in downtown Kingsville. Even wild turkeys went wild with reproduction—turkeys were everywhere. But, all of our wildlife species need to heal up from the drought of ’09, ’11, and ’12.

In 2015, we began an effort to summarize songbird sightings from King Ranch and the East Foundation properties from 2008 to 2015. It is amazing how all species of birds recovered when rainfall came at the right time. We are planning to publish that information in a Technical Bulletin in 2016. It simply is fascinating what we found.

At the CKWRI, lots of good things happened to us this past year. We had one of our books, authored by **Dr. Lenny Brennan** and our students, win a National Award at The Wildlife Society meeting in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Also, **Dr. Fidel Hernández** was the first CKWRI scientist ever elected to The Wildlife Society’s Board

Editor’s Note: Dr. Fred Bryant is CKWRI’s *Leroy G. Denman, Jr. Endowed Director of Wildlife Research*.

Did You Know?

Some female geckos and whiptails can lay viable eggs without the eggs being fertilized by a male (parthenogenesis). (A Field Guide to Texas Reptiles and Amphibians, R.D. Bartlett and P.P. Bartlett, Gulf Publishing Co.)

In South Texas, northern yellow bats can be found roosting under the drooping fronds of palm trees. (The Mammals of Texas, W.B. Davis and D.J. Schmidly, TPWD)

of Directors. Our undergraduate student chapter was proclaimed the best wildlife chapter in the nation for the 5th time. Only one other student chapter in North America has been recognized 5 times—pretty remarkable. We added over \$4 million to our endowment since August 2014, so our Endowment Campaign is off and running.

Sadly, one of South Texas' and Texas' greatest conservationists and CKWRI Board Member passed away on April 14th. Our great supporter and personal friend, **Buddy Temple**, lost his battle with cancer. Buddy and his wife Ellen have won every conservation award there is in the State of Texas, including the prestigious Leopold Award given by Texas Parks and Wildlife to only one landowner each year. It was a very sad day for our CKWRI family and for me personally, as Buddy and I had grown very close over the past 15 years. I miss him dearly.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute provides leadership in all aspects of our work. We are indebted to them for their commitment to CKWRI and its mission.

Chad Auler	A. C. Jones, IV	Barry Coates Roberts
Gus T. Canales	David Winfield Killam	Stuart W. Stedman
T. Dan Friedkin	Chris C. Kleberg	Buddy Temple
Henry R. Hamman	Tio Kleberg	<i>(deceased)</i>
<i>(Chairman)</i>	C. Berdon Lawrence	Ben F. Vaughan, III
George C. "Tim" Hixon	Kenneth E. Leonard	Bryan Wagner
Karen Hunke	James A. McAllen	Charles A. Williams
	Ellen B. Randall	

In 2016, **Dr. David Hewitt** who leads our Deer Research Program, will be away until August as he takes a well-deserved sabbatical. He will be spending time in Montana summarizing a mountain of data from the Comanche-Faith Deer Research Program. Over the past 15 years, we have had at least 14 students work on this project, spend time on these beautiful ranches in Dimmit and Maverick counties, and turn in a thesis. And, 8 more will graduate in the next 2 years. So there are

lots and lots of data to analyze and synthesize. It is virtually impossible to do that with all of the distractions here in Kingsville.

Mr. Chad Auler from Austin has accepted the Board's invitation to join them (see page 2 for the announcement). We are excited to have him join our team!

As you read this, we will be ¼ of the way into our 35th year. Having been founded by the Caesar Kleberg Foundation for Wildlife Conservation in 1981, we hope we have made the Trustees proud as we strive to live up to Caesar's legacy.

We truly hope 2015 blessed you as it blessed all of us. Hope each of you has a terrific 2016! ~

What Do They Eat?

The diet of Kemp's Ridley sea turtles "...consists mostly of crabs; also shrimp, snails, clams, jellyfish, sea stars, and fish." (<http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/ridley/>)

The mountain lion feeds primarily on deer, but will also consume a wide range of domesticated and wild small to medium-sized mammals. (The Mammals of Texas, W.B. Davis and D.J. Schmidly, TPWD)

Consider giving a tax-deductible donation to CKWRI



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