



Image by Jonathan Vail

FEBRUARY 2022

We promote the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education.

FROM THE CEO

Groundbreaking Natural Resource Education

NEAL WILKINS

If you are planning for a year, sow rice;

If you are planning for a decade, plant trees;

If you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.

ANCIENT PROVERB

As yellow school buses move their way through the ranch, you cannot ignore the mix of excited voices from hundreds of schoolkids arriving from the populated cities of the Rio Grande Valley. Historically, these were not normal sounds for the 27,000-acre El Sauz Ranch. When they get off the bus, these kids learn about the importance of cattle ranching, wildlife conservation, and the history of the land. Teaching these kids is now almost as common as cattle workings on East Foundation's ranches. As these young people grow into our country's future leaders, we have faith that exposing them to real outdoor education will make them more successful, and it will cause them to fall in love with the land. If we are to make any gains against the challenges

that face ranching and wildlife conservation, it will be accomplished through investing heavily in young people. To do otherwise ignores our real mission.

In this issue of East Foundation's newsletter, we highlight the impact of our education programs. Our education team recently hosted the grand opening of our Elliff-El Sauz Education Facility, where several businesses and organizations have trusted us by investing in our mission. We also highlight how outdoor experiences and exposure to ranching has shaped the lives of some of East Foundation's ranch and science staff. Because it is less than honest to leave you with the idea that we are somehow the pioneers in pursuing these ideas, we draw attention here to the history and ground-breaking work of the Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation – their work inspires ours.

WELDER WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Robert Hughes Welder, like many South Texas ranchers, understood the long-term importance of

conserving ranchlands. In his will, Mr. Welder designated a portion of his estate along with 7,800 acres of ranchland along the Aransas River to be put into a Foundation for supporting wildlife science, education, and management. In 1954, the year after his passing, the Rob & Bessie Welder Foundation was established. In stating his intent for the Welder Wildlife Foundation, Rob Welder laid out his 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



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San Antonio

200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 410
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Education con't.

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.

Note: Forty years later, this same statement (with only slight changes) appeared in Robert East's 1995 Trust Document as he directed the formation of what would later become East Foundation.

Dr. Clarence Cottam, already known as one of our nation's pioneering wildlife scientists, became Welder Wildlife Foundation's first director. Dr. Cottam directed the Foundation from 1956 until his death in 1973. It was Clarence Cottam that initially set direction and acted upon Rob Welder's vision, and he opened the refuge for public education.

In 1980, the Welder Trustees appointed Dr. James Teer as director. Much like Clarence Cottam, James Teer was a nationally prominent wildlife scientist. He expanded the Foundation's scientific pursuits through research and graduate training, and he knew that future success in meeting Welder's vision was possible only through the expansion of education programs.

In 1993 Dr. Teer recruited Selma Glasscock to lead the Foundation's education programs. Selma was raised in Sonora, Texas. At her family's camp along the Devil's River she fell in love with the land and wildlife of West Texas. In 1972, she attended Sul Ross State University in the West Texas town of Alpine. She went on to a graduate program at Angelo State, and then finally received a PhD in Wildlife Science from Texas A&M. Selma's passion was to teach others so that they could gain the same

appreciation for the outdoors that she was afforded.

Now serving as the Welder Wildlife Foundation's assistant director, Selma Glasscock has led education programs for the Welder Wildlife Foundation for nearly 30 years. Since she began, these programs have directly impacted well more than 120,000 students and teachers. Along with Dr. Terry Blankenship, the Foundation's current director, Selma has also led the establishment of the James G. Teer Conservation Leadership Institute within the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society. This Institute provides early career professional training to ensure a future legacy of well-trained conservation leaders.

Over the years, the Welder Wildlife Foundation has supported 343 graduate researchers from 63 universities, all attaining advanced degrees in wildlife management and conservation. These professionals are now in leadership positions throughout the nation. Through their association with Welder, these professionals witnessed and participated in youth and teacher education programs – many of them no doubt are now more effective leaders because of their exposure to that part of the Foundation's mission.

Here, I have only scratched the surface of the 67-year legacy of the Rob & Bessie Welder Foundation. Likewise, I have only given a superficial description of those folks that have taken purpose to heart. This is to pay a small homage to those we admire and take inspiration from, to meet our mission. We remain convinced that our future prosperity depends upon the land and its stewardship. Furthermore, our future ability to conserve tomorrow's working rangelands depends on what we teach young people today.

EDUCATION INSIGHTS

Welcome to the Elliff-El Sauz Education Facility!

TINA BUFORD

It feels so good to be home! Well, in the case of Behind the Gates, it feels so good to have a home!

Thanks to those who chose to invest in the youth of South Texas, Behind the Gates now has a permanent space to host schools from across the Rio Grande Valley.

Lead sponsor Elliff Motors; Patron Sponsors Texas Regional Bank, Enbridge, and Makena; and Sustainer sponsors Las Huellas Association, Wildlife Systems, H. Yturria Family, Frost Banks and The Quillin Foundation have helped the Foundation construct a dedicated education center on our El Sauz Ranch that will provide students an immersive learning experience educating them about what happens behind the gates of a working ranch and how it is relevant in their lives.

Started in 2014, Behind the Gates now has successfully hosted 9,372 fifth grade students from IDEA Public Schools. Behind the Gates at the El Sauz Ranch is a week-long field lesson that breaks down the sometimes complicated message that private ranches provide many public benefits into “bite-sized” learning nuggets.

With the help of our partners, we rotate students through six stations, utilizing hands-on activities to bring these core messages to life:

- *Land to Sea Stewardship* – With proper grazing strategies, ranches can produce quality protein while also serving as nature’s filtration system, resulting in less soil eroding into our water systems.
Partner: **UTRGV Coastal Studies Lab**

- *Ranches Provide Habitat for Native Wildlife* – Keeping rangeland in production and protected from development helps ensure that wildlife will have a home.

Partner: **Texas Parks and Wildlife & Texas Wildlife Association**

- *Endangered Species Need the Open Space Ranches Provide* – Endangered species like the ocelot depend on the critical habitat ranches provide to survive.

Partner: **Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute**



East Foundation Graduate Student Lindsay Martinez isn't just out in the field working on her thesis on ocelot conservation, she's teaching students at Behind the Gates about the importance private lands play in ensuring ocelot survival long-term.

- *El Sauz is an Ecosystem* – Ranches are ecosystems that support the cycle of life. Students venture off the beaten path to discover the producers, consumers, and decomposers that live and interact on El Sauz
Partner: **Texas Master Naturalist**
- *Ranching is an Art and a Science* – Ranch managers have both knowledge of the land and

natural resources as well as a sense of artistic application developed over time through management successes and failures. Utilizing science “artistically” allows them to truly become stewards of the land, balancing the needs of the lives that depend on it.

Partner: **East Foundation Ranch Staff**

- *Early Settlers Relied on the Land for Survival without HEB* – Using live theater, students learn how early settlers of South Texas used the natural resources provided by the land to survive.
Partner: **Museum of South Texas History**

Behind the Gates is a powerful tool that reconnects students to the land, teaching them that our quality-of-life stems from healthy ecosystems like the El Sauz Ranch.

After attending our Behind the Gates lessons, when they pass ranch gates while traveling across Texas, they will have a deeper understanding of the benefits of ranching and a better sense of familiarity that hopefully will one day lead them to support the conservation of open spaces

across Texas.

If you would like to help us expand opportunities for students to experience a learning laboratory like El Sauz, please contact us and we will translate your support into more boots on the ground!

Becoming a Wildlife Biologist

ANDREA MONTALVO

Full disclosure, I am not a Texan. Nor did I grow up anywhere remotely reminiscent of the countryside. I grew up in a town seven miles from the City of Boston in a densely populated town in Massachusetts. I grew up with love, knowledge, and appreciation for the city. My parents didn't hunt, fish, camp, or hike. But still, subconsciously, I found enough access to nature in concrete and suburbia to spur a career in wildlife biology at 19 years old. And it took until 19 years old for me to consciously decide to take that career path.

My career path isn't unique. Many early-career biologists will start their stories with "I didn't know I could do this for a living." Careers in conservation are not well advertised and generally are not well-liked or understood by parents. Mass urbanization most likely has a lot to do with this. Fewer people hunt, fewer people have access to outdoor recreation, and fewer people can afford the time it takes to develop a career in wildlife and conservation.

I was fortunate to find exposure in my undergraduate studies at the University of Vermont. I transferred there from Boston University after my freshman year out of sheer desperation to get out of the city I grew up in, and away from a career in communications that did not suit my personality or strengths.

Once in Vermont, I got to do exactly what I and most wildlife biologists are looking to do – get outside. My program was heavily lab-focused, and by the lab, I mean outside in the woods. We had a field component to almost every

class. I hiked, biked, skied, and developed a healthy obsession with identifying and pressing plants. I spent time working in New England with environmental education, took a semester in the rainforest of Australia, and worked throughout Vermont on land steward projects.



Hailing from eastern Massachusetts, Andrea Montalvo came to South Texas in 2010 and we at the East Foundation are lucky to have her. She came to us as a graduate student in 2014 and started working with us full time in 2018.

Upon graduation, I was looking to leave my comfort zone and confront a different viewpoint on wildlife education. Though I understood the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, I still lacked knowledge and interest in hunting, which eventually prompted me to apply for an internship on a ranch in South Texas – go hard or go home, right? I was probably the only applicant they had because I got the job, but at the time, I didn't understand the impact that decision would have on my understanding of wildlife conservation.

I arrived in South Texas in 2010 on a three-month internship and I never left. Understanding conservation through private-

land ownership and how that tied into the hunting and ranching industry drew me to stay here. Through my experiences with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, the Texas Brigades program, and the East Foundation, I grew to appreciate the work that goes into conservation education at nearly every age category.

I was fortunate to be hired on by the East Foundation and afforded the opportunity to continue to research and develop as a biologist. More importantly, I get to spend time with graduate students, researchers, and technicians with backgrounds both similar and very different from my own. It is my hope that South Texas will give them the same kind of understanding and respect for ranching and private lands conservation that it gave me, even if their paths change course.



Andrea Montalvo is currently the Research Scientist & Hebronville Site Director for the East Foundation. In addition to leading scientific endeavors for the Foundation, she educates K-12 students that visit our ranches from all over Texas and leads teams of interns, technicians, and graduate students who come to us from all over the U.S. Pictured above, Andrea inserts a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT tag) into a white-footed mouse on the El Sauz Ranch to track the presence and use of areas after prescribed fires.

FROM THE RANCH

Slowly Migrated South

MOLLI FOXLEY

For a long time, cattle were nothing more than the source of a delicious meal or a living lawn ornament that I saw through a vehicle window as I passed through cattle country. I grew up as a big city kid between Nebraska and Rhode Island without any involvement in or real exposure to agriculture. My great grandfather and grandfather on my father's side owned cattle operations in the Midwest but sold everything by the time I was born.

Cattle specifically may never have been on my radar as a child, but animals always were. From an early age, I dreamt of being a veterinarian like my grandmother. Fast forward to freshman year chemistry class at University of Tennessee at Martin, and I realized that dream would remain just that – a dream. From that realization, I had to reorganize my life and did so by taking a sabbatical in New Orleans. After two years, I enrolled at Louisiana State University (LSU), where everything changed for me.



From the LSU AgCenter Central Research Station Beef Unit to East Foundation ranches, Molli continues her passion for caring for livestock. She started her career working with herds of commercial and purebred Brahman cattle and now manages multiple herds of Beefmaster, Santa Gertrudis, and Red Angus composite cattle for the East Foundation.

When I enrolled in school, I had no idea what I wanted to do, but I knew it was going to involve animals. My eyes were opened to a whole new world when I took a student worker position at the LSU AgCenter Central Research Station Beef Unit. Beginning day one at the Beef Unit, without an ounce of experience, my life changed. I had finally found something that excited me, and I was willing to do even though I had to wake up super early.

A huge passion for cattle and the agriculture industry developed during my time at LSU. Unaware of what the future held as graduation approached, I planned on working various temporary positions until a permanent door opened. Little did I know that it would be right around the corner.

Interning at the East Foundation right after college opened doors and provided experiences that were previously unimaginable. As my three-year anniversary working with the East Foundation approaches, I reflect on everything I have learned since that first day at the LSU Beef Unit.

I have learned that you do not have to grow up in this industry, but you must develop a love and an appreciation for it. I know that being a cattlegirl is more than having boots in the dirt. It's also about sharing what we do, and why, with those that are unaware of the importance of our

land and what lives on it. I share that admiration for this industry and for the East Foundation with the students that enter our gates, and I hope that some of those students may pass on that same admiration one day.

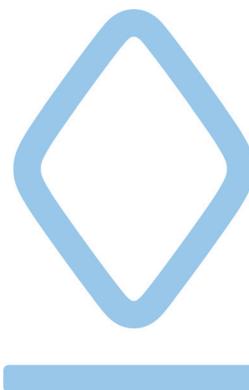


Image by Emily McCartney



Image by Emily McCartney

Molli Foxley, Assistant Livestock Manager for the East Foundation, can hang with the best of them. On top of cattle working and managing the herds at Ranchito and in Coloraditas, Molli educates K-12 students that come to our ranches from all over Texas.



Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY 24-26

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society in Marble Falls, Texas

MARCH 9-10

East Foundation Board Meeting in San Antonio

MARCH 25-27

Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Convention & Expo in Fort Worth, Texas

MARCH 29-30

Professional Advisors Meeting at San Antonio Viejo Ranch

APRIL 18

Texas A&M AgriLife Veterinary Science Youth Day at San Antonio Viejo Ranch

ALUMNI PROFILE



Jadzia McDaniel A Rising Natural Resources Student

MASI MEJIA

Jadzia McDaniel was part of the Webb County Land Stewardship Ambassador (LSA) Cohort in 2021. Currently, Jadzia is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science with a minor in Geography and Sustainability through the University of Texas at San Antonio. She expects to graduate in 2025.

Jadzia was not your typical LSA student. She was never involved in 4-H or FFA, nor was she familiar with ranching or hunting. Prior to the LSA program, Jadzia could not understand why ranchers ranch and hunters hunt. Admittedly, she was a vegan and against hunting from the start of the Land Stewardship Ambassador Program.

As we progressed through the topics of each week, I could see how Jadzia was influenced by the different themes we discussed and how they related to ranching and hunting. It was a golden moment as an educator when during our wildlife week she saw the connection between “private land stewards and their role towards conservation.” Jadzia

came to realize that ranching and hunting were not only a way of life for many South Texans but that they also provide so many public benefits. Jadzia notes that “this program taught me the multitude of ways the environment impacts sectors all over human life, from the economy and education, to even our food.”

“I learned more than my entire senior year,” said Jadzia. “Land Stewardship Ambassadors is a program that strives to enrich students with the importance of conservation of our natural environments; topics that are never discussed in K-12 education.”

Jadzia is currently applying to various internships within the field of natural resources. I have no doubt that she will go on to be a leader within the field because of her experience in our program. While she might not eat meat or be a hunter anytime soon, I know she will be an ambassador of land stewardship.



EMPLOYEE PROFILE



ELISA VELADOR

Elisa Velador was born and raised in Brownsville, Texas, a beautiful border town along the Texas coast. She spent her childhood outside climbing trees, fishing, and playing with neighborhood friends. She also enjoyed spending summers in Mexico with her grandparents and spending time at the beach. Elisa earned both her B.S. and M.S. degrees in Biology from the University of Texas at Brownsville & Texas Southmost College. Before Elisa joined our team, she taught high school biology, chemistry, aquatic science, and AP environmental science for eight years.

Elisa works with us at the East Foundation through our partnership with Texas Wildlife Association (TWA). She teaches students in the classroom by visiting different campuses in the Rio Grande Valley for Wildlife by Design presentations. She conducts Field Lessons on the East Foundation's El Sauz Ranch where she teaches outdoor, hands-on activities. In the summer, she leads teacher workshops and trains educators how to utilize TWA's resources such as Discovery Trunks,

Distance Learning, Stewarding Texas, and Wildlife by Design.

In addition to her teaching duties, Elisa is also an instructor for the Cameron County cohort of our Land Stewardship Ambassadors program, a 10-week leadership program for high school students. She enjoys leading classes out on the land and finds it rewarding to see children being able to learn first-hand the importance of our land, water, and wildlife. The experiences students have on our ranches are often once in a lifetime.

Elisa feels privileged to have the opportunity to work with the East Foundation and Texas Wildlife Association. Educating future generations of leaders for Texas is important work and will have a lasting, positive impact on our natural resources.

In her free time, Elisa enjoys spending time with her two boys and her husband while hiking at the nature centers throughout the Rio Grande Valley, going to the beach, visiting the deer lease, and working on her native plant garden. A conservation educator through and through, her long-term goal at home is to convert her lawn into a native wildscape, have a vegetable garden, and plant fruit trees in her backyard.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Las Huellas

TINA BUFORD

Behind the Gates 2022, hosted at the new Elliff-El Sauz Education Center on the El Sauz ranch near Port Mansfield is in the books, and just like the very first BTG in 2014, Las Huellas was there. A long-term partner of the Foundation, Las Huellas Association is committed to educating people of all ages – especially the youth of South Texas – about the conservation, management and enhancement of wildlife and wildlife habitat. For this reason, the members of Las Huellas Association have chosen to support Behind the Gates.

“East Foundation is a perfect match for Las Huellas,” said Ronnie Humphreys, board member of Las Huellas Association. “Las Huellas is a unique association that likes to create firsts for all people we encounter. That’s why we participate in East Foundation’s Behind the Gates. Together, we have enlightened thousands of Valley youth, for the first time, on what happens behind the gates of a working ranch. This educational experience allows students to connect private land management to the quality of their lives.”

Along with supporting Behind the Gates, Las Huellas every year awards students from the Rio Grande Valley who are involved in conservation with a \$2,500 scholarship. We value Las Huellas’ continued commitment to the youth of South Texas and together we will foster the love of South Texas within future generations who will one day care for it.

RAINFALL REPORT

Hold Steady

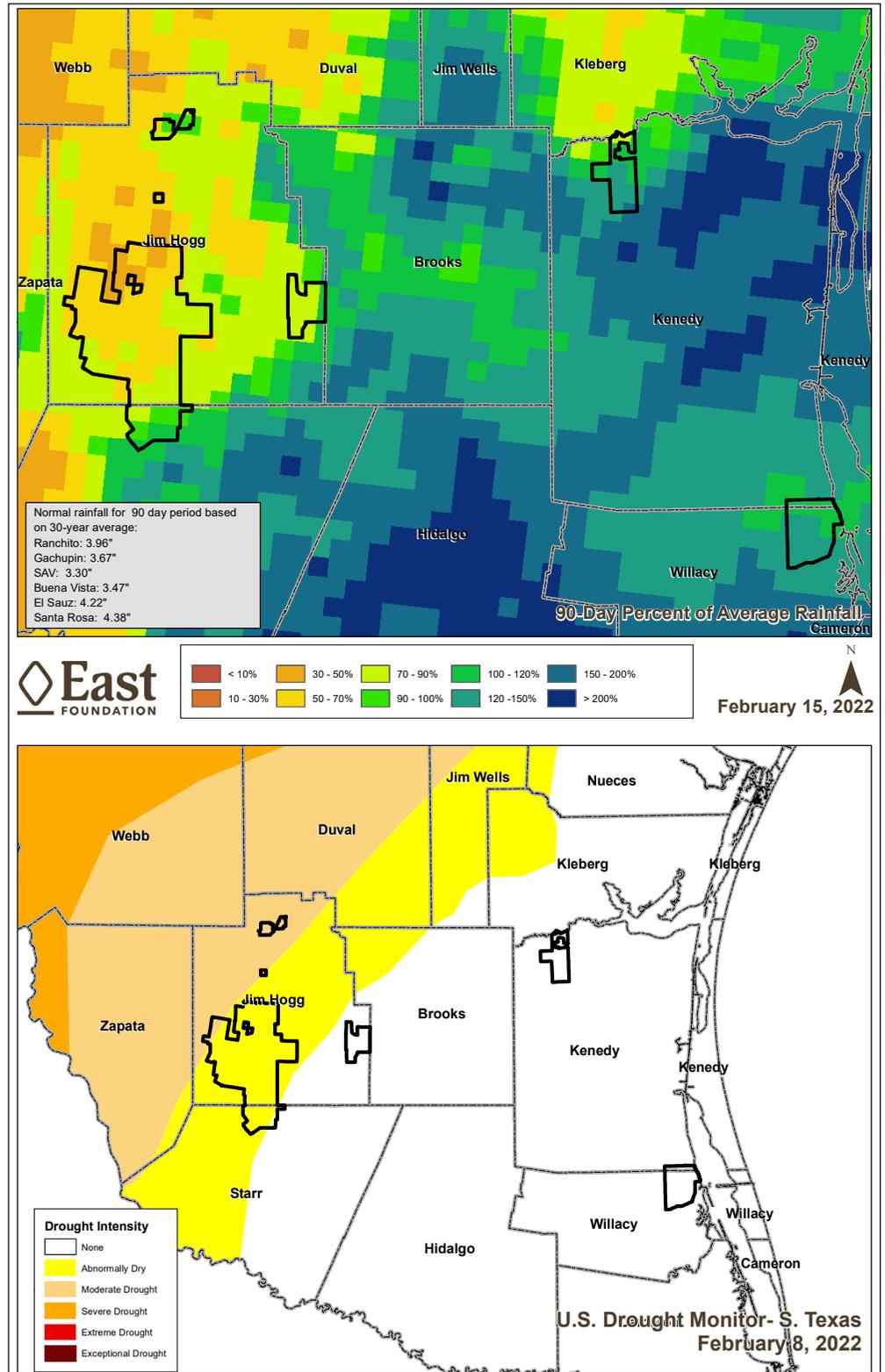
ALLIE BIEDENHARN

The San Antonio Viejo Ranch has received less than “normal” rainfall through the winter months. La Niña is likely to continue through the spring, decreasing the chances of rain through the late winter and spring. It is important that we monitor short-term range conditions to plan and adjust our activities as rangelands can quickly deteriorate in South Texas.

The San Antonio Viejo Ranch is, however, holding on to minimal drought conditions. The recorded rainfall across the ranch has been between one to three inches in the last three months.

Despite the dryer conditions, the Santa Rosa and El Sauz ranches on the coast continue to receive ample rain. Santa Rosa records report between four to six inches of rainfall across the ranch, while El Sauz boasts five to seven inches of rainfall recorded.

For more information on drought and other weather events or to view information specific to your part of the state please visit: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>.





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SECURITY REPORT

Wild West in South Texas

MATT ROBINSON

Three assaults, one burglary of habitation, one possession of stolen vehicle, one possession of stolen property, numerous criminal mischief violations, destruction of private property, one sexual assault, one reported sexual assault – no victim found, one murder reported – no body found, one possible rape site found, one gang member from San Antonio arrested on felony warrants, and hundreds if not thousands of trespass violations, not to mention the violation of illegally entering the United States. It sounds like something you would hear on the news, in downtown Big City, USA.

Unfortunately, this all happened in the last few months on our Santa Rosa Ranch. It's a real eye-opener, especially since this is not only happening on East Foundation ranches – it's happening throughout our South Texas ranch country. In many places, it is even worse. All the crimes against individuals at Santa Rosa have been committed by undocumented immigrants on other immigrants. Very few of the cases have been solved. We work hard to help Border Patrol capture the smugglers and undocumented immigrants. We feel this helps keep our people on

East Foundation ranches a little safer.

I spend a lot of time tracking, looking for tracks, locating heavily used trails and setting cameras up to document the smuggling activity. I use a game-type camera that immediately sends the image to my cell phone. When the camera sends me a picture of a group of people being smuggled through our properties, I react by immediately sending the picture and location coordinates to the nearest Border Patrol station. This has proved to be a productive way to stem the flow of illegal smuggling activity through our properties. Unfortunately, since about January of 2021, things have changed.

Smuggling activity has increased at least ten-fold, and immigrants have been turning themselves in at the U.S.-Mexico Border in large numbers. This and COVID have strained Border Patrol resources. The Border Patrol stations that serve our areas must send a large number of agents to assist in processing the immigrants that give up along the Border. It takes lots of agents to process, feed, guard and take care of all these people. This, combined with COVID casualties, usually only leaves enough agents to operate the checkpoints in our area.

For example, a Border Patrol drone flew over the Kingsville sector one night a while back and found 160 people walking in different groups. There were only two agents to respond. Understandably, I am having a hard time getting Border Patrol to respond to my camera activations. They do the best they can – there is just no one to send. The smugglers know this. It got to

where I was getting three groups a night on my cameras in Santa Rosa, and something needed to be done.

After speaking with several law enforcement agencies and ranch security teams, it sounded like we could coordinate with Border Patrol and start apprehending and disrupting some of these groups ourselves. Long story short, we put a group of officers together to react to my camera activations. We would sit in a central location in Santa Rosa and wait for a camera to go off. It was a guessing game to figure out where to go to get in front of a group, but I had a good idea from my many months of tracking and monitoring cameras.

Here is a run-down of our first ambush. I had a camera activation and had a good idea what trail the smugglers would follow. This particular night our team consisted of four DPS tactical marine officers and me. We moved to an area approximately 1.7 miles ahead of the group to hide and wait. While waiting we were able to get four Game Wardens to join us.

We were all equipped with night vision and were watching down a fence line for the smugglers' approach. Eventually, after what seemed like hours, they came walking towards us ... but on the wrong side of the fence. Everyone except me jumped the fence to get in position. I stayed on the wrong side in case they jumped on my side when we sprung the trap. Also, I am old and don't like climbing a rickety fence.

As they approached, we all hid a little deeper in the grass and for some reason, I could hear my heart beating in my ears. They started walking between us and I counted them. 1, 2, 3 ... 12 waiting for someone to jump out and say "halt!" Nothing happened. We all sat there and waited for someone

else to jump up. No one did and we let them walk on by! Eventually we came out of hiding and asked each other, "What the hell?"

We started trotting along behind the group watching in night vision. We could see the last couple of people waving their arms at us telling us to catch up – they thought we were part of the group. Eventually, two of our more athletic officers caught up and caught two off the back of the group, scattering the rest. By the time I caught up, one of the DPS guys already had chased one down, handcuffed him in a manner where he couldn't run away, and had another caught that was resisting. I was able to get there to assist on the second one.

It turns out that we got four out of 12 and we realized we are not very good at this. Border Patrol came and picked up the four and we moved to another ambush location. From previous experience, I knew a scattered group would gradually gather and follow the same trail. Several hours later, two came walking our way. They got to a perfect place, and we jumped out to catch them. That was when I realized they are fast and I am not!

I jumped up to run and knew I had the second one. I had the angle on him and everything. However, my 25-year-old mind did not match my 65-year-old legs and I immediately tripped and fell on my face. Thank goodness for young, fast Game Wardens. Both guys were caught bringing our total to six out of 12.

Over time our group has gotten much better at catching these people, but that doesn't include me. I am good at catching the slow, tired ones. Sometimes I just get a jacket or shirt. You have to grab the person, not clothing, or all you will end up with is empty clothing. In the long run, our activities seem to have helped on the Santa Rosa. I

have gone from three groups a night to one group in three weeks on my cameras.

We may not have caught all that have come through, but we continue to disrupt their smuggling activities, and it looks like at least for now, many are going around Santa Rosa. Many thanks to the Border Patrol, Kenedy County Sheriff's Deputies, Texas Game Wardens, Texas DPS Tactical Marine Unit, and Kenedy Trust Security for the help.

Just a side note, this activity made me remember something my doctor or maybe it was my wife told me. "The hospital is full of old men that still think they are young." I mentioned this to Game Warden Stormy King, and he said, "Nope it is at least half full of young men who thought they were sober."



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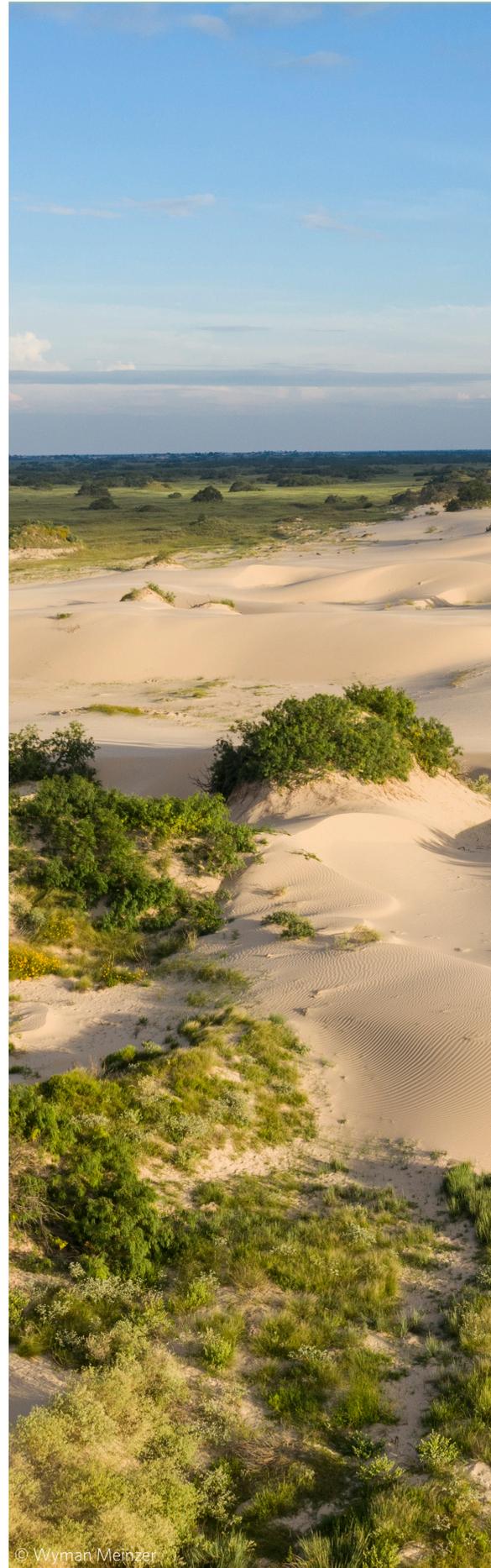
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