East FOUNDATION

SPRING
NEWSLETTER

RANCHING | SCIENCE | EDUCATION

Alma de la Garza shares the legacy of El Randado and her family's efforts to preserve this important historic site where Tom Lea was once inspired by South Texas culture.

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FROM THE CEO NEAL WILKINS

INAUGURATION OF TOM LEA TRAIL MOBILE TOUR IN HEBBRONVILLE

March 2nd marked a new era in Hebbronville tourism when 100 guests gathered in the shade of the Old Jail Museum to celebrate its inclusion on the Texas Historical Commission's Tom Lea Trail mobile tour https://tomleatrail.stqry.app/. Visitors (students and homebound as well) can explore 12 cities and 24 sites from their phones with the art and writing of Tom Lea as their guide.

> " El Randado " originated as a Mexican Land Grant to Antonio Garcia. Garcia received 5 sitios of land (about 22,000 acres) in 1836, and this Land Grant served as the core for what would become about 80,000 acres that later made the " Rancho del Randado. "

Judge Juan Carlos Guerra welcomed guests on a beautiful spring morning, where they enjoyed remarks by Charlotte Hellen about the museum's history. Homero Vera spoke about the origins of Hebbronville and El Randado - the old horse ranch where splendid Spanish horses were once bred. Adair Margo shared how the ruins of the ranch inspired Tom Lea to write for the first time, and Alma de la Garza, dressed in bright

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EDUCATION INSIGHTS ELISA VELADOR

10 YEARS OF BEHIND THE GATES FIELD DAYS

We've come a long way!

This year we celebrate 10 years since the inception of the East Foundation's Behind the Gates Field Days. Behind the Gates Field Days bring students that are in elementary, middle, and high school out on our working lands for an outdoor experience like no other. Using the land as a living classroom and with an emphasis on land stewardship, participants learn about the science that occurs behind the gates of a working cattle ranch and about land, water, and wildlife conservation. Our goal is to educate the next generation of Texas citizens about the importance of land stewardship and to empower them with the knowledge needed to become advocates of the natural resources found on their own land, their state and beyond.

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East FOUNDATION

Locations

Hebbronville
310 East Galbraith Street
Hebbronville, Texas 78361

San Antonio Viejo Ranch
474 East Ranch Road
Hebbronville, Texas 78361

El Sauz Ranch
37216 Highway 186
Port Mansfield, Texas 78598

San Antonio
200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(210) 447-0126

eastfoundation.net

ABOUT US

East Foundation promotes the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education.

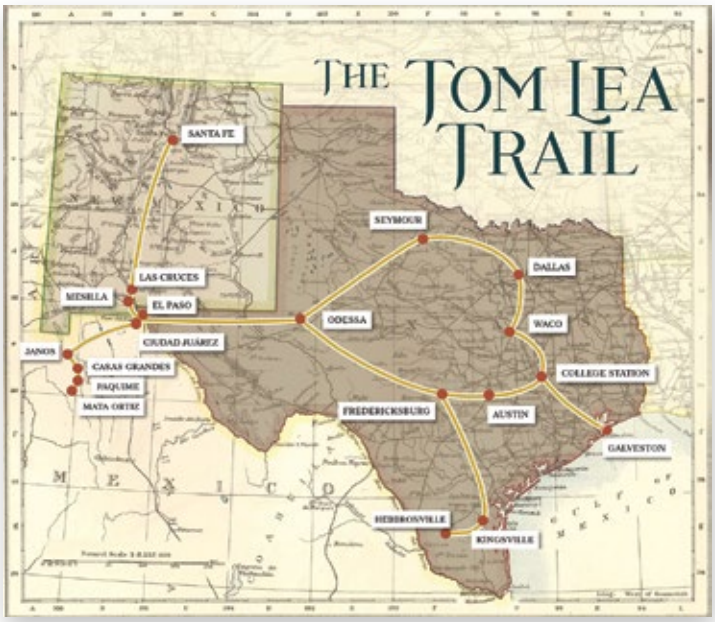
We manage more than 217,000 acres of native South Texas rangeland, operated as six separate ranches in Jim Hogg, Kenedy, Starr, and Willacy counties. Our land is a working laboratory where scientists and managers work together to address issues important to wildlife management, rangeland health, and ranch productivity. We ensure that ranching and wildlife management work together to conserve healthy rangelands.

East Foundation was created through the generous gift of the East family in 2007. To honor their legacy, we uphold their vision and values that were established more than a century ago. In pursuit of our mission, we use our abundant natural resources to build future leaders through programs that introduce students to private land stewardship. We invest in future professionals through internships, graduate fellowships, and close engagements with university programs.

We care for our land and are always exploring more efficient ways to get things done and are continuously guided by our values to conserve the land and resources.

We do what's right for the land and the life that depends on it.

embroidered blouse and boots, spoke about her family legacy and its efforts to conserve El Randado. She met visitors at the property after lunch, graciously showing them its' chapel with her daughter and grandchildren in attendance. Several guests were third generation descendants of workers with the de la Garza family.



The event – including a barbecue lunch with music by Jorge and Oscar Herrera and art by Armando Hinojosa – was sponsored by the East Foundation, Judge Guerra and JHC Commissioners. For more information on the Tom Lea Trail, visit https://www.tomlea.com/thetomleatrailmobilewebsite.

TOM LEA'S FOOTPRINTS

Tom Lea, who passed in 2001, was arguably Texas' most outstanding artist, illustrator, and writer. His legacy is maintained and celebrated by the Tom Lea Institute in his hometown of El Paso. For many of us in South Texas, the most prominent legacy from Tom Lea has been his two-volume history of the King Ranch, published in 1957 – a masterpiece that he researched, wrote, and illustrated. Tom Lea made footprints in South Texas two decades before his publication of The King Ranch. In the late 1930s, he began to travel with J. Frank Dobie as he was doing his field research for The Longhorns, a 1941 book featuring Dobie's writing accompanied by Tom Lea's illustrations. It was certainly during this period that Tom Lea travelled to Randado, where he would have likely learned of the East family, and where he would have seen the remnants of one of the earliest settlements in South Texas.

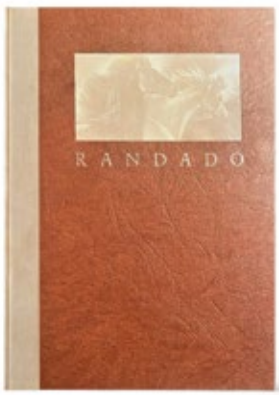
"El Randado" originated as a Mexican Land Grant to Antonio Garcia. Garcia received 5 sitios of land (about 22,000 acres) in 1836, and this Land Grant served as the core for what would become about 80,000 acres that later made the "Rancho del Randado." The old town and ranch headquarters is near the current intersection of State Highway 16 and FM 649 – about 30 miles south of Hebbronville. The town of Randado was once one of the largest population centers in the area. In fact, an early voting map of Jim Hogg County (from about 1913) notes that Randado was the largest population center outside Falfurrias. By the time Tom Lea and J. Frank Dobie visited Randado, the population had declined and the ranch was divided among family heirs of Hipolito Garcia. But the ranching heritage must have still been alive. The culture of vaqueros was still there, and the remnants of longhorns and wild mustangs were still around. The old Catholic Church and some of the remnants of El Randado remain to this day to the credit of Alma de la Garza's family.

Publisher Carl Hertzog printed the writings and artwork from Tom Lea's time in Randado from the summer of 1940. The original 1941 printing of Lea's Randado was limited to 100 copies – an original copy is a prize for any collector of sensible Texas books.

Because of Tom Lea's time in Randado, Hebbronville is one of nineteen communities along the "Tom Lea Trail." The Tom Lea Trail includes locations throughout Texas and New Mexico. Because of Randado, Hebbronville represents the southernmost community along the Tom Lea trail. To find out more go to https://tomlea.com/. Some of the original Rancho del Randado is part of the San Antonio Viejo Ranch, and Tom Lea's time at Randado certainly included some time with Tom T. East, as he was a friend of J. Frank Dobie.

Note: Many thanks to Adair Margo (Founder) and Holly Cobb (Executive Director) of the Tom Lea Institute for reminding us of the importance of Randado to Tom Lea's legacy.

Hebbronville's designation on the Tom Lea Trail would not have been possible without the vision and hard work of the Museum Foundation of Hebbronville and the Jim Hogg County Commissioner's Court.



"Tom Lea's 1941 publication of Randado is essentially a poem inspired by his time in South Texas"

OUR PEOPLE

Just as the East Foundation mission drives our organizational focus, our people are the boots on the ground who work diligently to promote land stewardship through our ranching operations, science-focused research, and informative educational programs. Below are highlights on the foundation's recent hires and promotions, as well as news regarding recent promotions and awards.

SETH RANKINS

Seth is originally from Cusseta, Alabama, where his parents and brothers operate the family farm. As a boy, Seth enjoyed being outdoors and spent many hours in the woods running a trapline, hunting, and fishing. His passion for the outdoors led Seth to pursue a B.Sc. degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management at Auburn University. While attending Auburn University Seth got his first exposure to research working with the Auburn Deer Lab.

Seth completed a M.Sc. in Rangeland and Wildlife Management with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. During his Masters, Seth collaborated with the East Foundation to study how forage quantity and quality influence white-tailed deer morphology across the South Texas Coastal Plain and Tamaulipan Thornscrub. Additionally, Seth coordinated with many of the Student Chapters of The Wildlife Society throughout Texas to provide their members an opportunity to gain hands on experience capturing and handling deer on the East Foundation ranches.

Currently, Seth is working on a Ph.D. at the University of Wyoming. His research is focused on the nutritional carrying capacity of endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep in California. He enjoys the challenges of working in the rugged terrain that bighorn sheep inhabit, although spending time in California has been quite a cultural shock and learning experience.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:

"Too often ranching and agriculture is presented as being at odds with wildlife management and conservation. I appreciated being able to work with the East Foundation, where the mindset is to find solutions to make ranching and wildlife managers allies rather than adversaries.

Although my research work did not always go as I originally planned, these challenges prepared me to succeed no matter where I end up in the future. Additionally, working with the East Foundation helped me create a network of wildlife

professionals, both within and beyond Texas. Even if my research did not change the world, or how we manage deer, I count my time in South Texas as a success because I learned how to conduct sound science and how to communicate with a diversity of audiences including managers, students, and scientists."

Lindsay Martinez is from Great Falls, Montana. She has a bachelor's degree in ecology and evolutionary biology from Princeton University and a master's degree in wildlife and fisheries science from Texas A&M University.

As the Research Program Coordinator for the East Foundation, Lindsay is responsible for supporting research and conservation projects for ocelots and other species of conservation concern in South Texas. She coordinates with our science team and our partners like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden to develop plans to create an ocelot breeding and reintroduction program in Texas.

Lindsay has worked with the East Foundation in several other positions before starting with us as our Research Program Coordinator. She worked on San Antonio Viejo and El Sauz during her time as a wildlife intern and technician and she was part of our graduate student program while working on her master's degree.

Prior to joining us at the East Foundation, Lindsay was a policy intern in Washington D.C. with The Wildlife Society.

Lindsay loves the outdoors. Her love of outdoor activities like hiking, camping, canoeing, and fishing helped her to become passionate about wildlife and conservation. Some of her favorite things she's experienced in Texas are kayaking on the Laguna Madre and camping in the Sam Houston National Forest.

San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo®

The San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo (SASSR) is a volunteer organization that emphasizes agriculture and education to develop the youth of Texas. Since its inception in 1949, $255 million has been awarded through scholarships, grants, endowments, junior livestock auctions, calf scramble program, and show premiums. Comprised of over 40 committees and almost 7,000 volunteers, the Show has impacted over one million students across Texas.

During the 18-days of rodeo, the Wildlife & Natural Resources Committee cultivates an appreciation for our land through live demonstrations, displays, and educational seminars. Our partnership with SASSR began in 2022. **Through our aligned missions, the SASSR and East Foundation have hosted seminars related to water management and precipitation, endangered species and private lands, carbon sequestration, habitat management for livestock and wildlife, and more. Attendees are always appreciative of the programs and the seminars continue to grow each year.**

The SASSR is proud to support the East foundation's Land Stewardship Ambassador program where a student's knowledge of the environment and the outdoors can be encouraged, along with their leadership skills.

FROM THE RANCH

EDDIE REYNA AND LANDON SCHOFIELD

Season of Burning Effects on Vegetative Communities and Rangeland Health

East Foundation: El Sauz Ranch
Willacy and Kennedy County, Texas

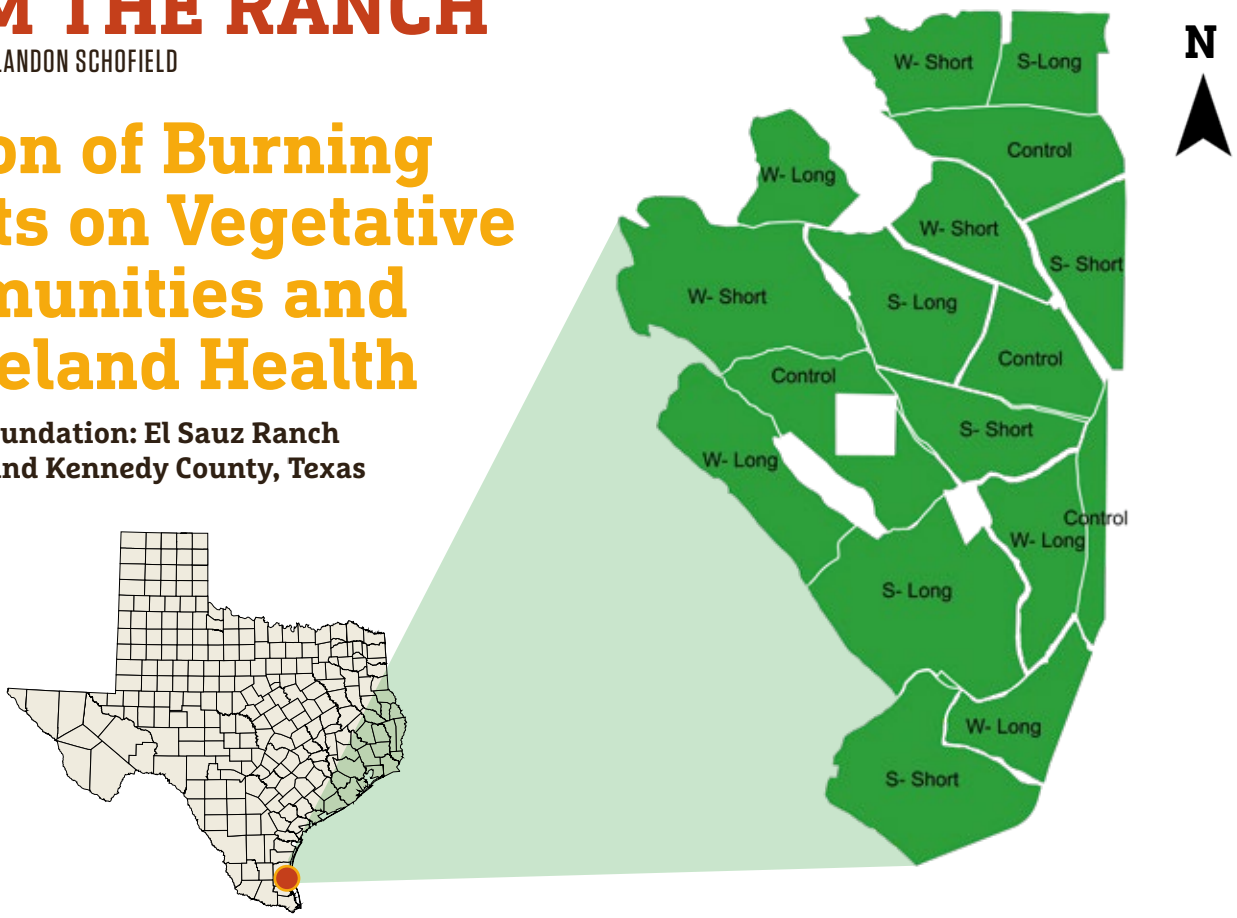


Figure 1

East Foundation's El Sauz Ranch near Port Mansfield, Texas. Burn plots assigned a burn season (w=winter and s=summer), a return interval of long or short (long≥5 year and short=3 years) or assigned as a control.

The East Foundation utilizes prescribed fires as a land management tool across the 217,000 acres under the Foundation's stewardship. The Foundation's prescribed fire program seeks to reintroduce natural wildfire cycles that once shaped South Texas landscapes in order to promote revitalization of native plant species, thinning of areas of dense brush, and improve forage resources for cattle and wildlife.

Historically, wildfires periodically burned through these areas, clearing out dense, accumulated brush and revitalizing native grasses and vegetation. Based on decades of research, fire is believed to have occurred on the land in South Texas every five to seven years. Decades of overgrazing paired with fire suppression policies have left many ecosystems that depend on occasional fires degraded. By applying fire back to the land, land stewards are helping to restore the biodiversity and resiliency of habitats. Burning decreases dense mesquite and huisache shrub growth, reducing competition for resources that grasses and other plants need. It also removes litter and opens up areas to stimulate the germination and sprouting of native vegetation. Many native plants even depend on the occasional heat, smoke, and chemical signals from fire to complete their lifecycles.

In the short-term, prescribed fires provide better, more nutritious forage for livestock and wildlife. And over the long run, integrated prescribed fire, grazing, and habitat management promotes rangeland plant diversity and productivity.

Much of the Foundation's burn program consists of a patch-burn grazing approach. Patch-burn grazing is a method of using prescribed fire and grazing alternately throughout smaller sections of a large,

Figure 2 **Prescribed burning creates a diverse post-burn plant community on El Sauz Ranch.**

unfenced grazing area. Livestock are allowed to stay in the area before, during, and after burning and are free to choose where to graze and where to rest. This allows them to self-regulate their grazing and move into a recently burned area when there is sufficient high-quality forage to make it worthwhile.

The objectives of each burn vary depending on the management goals and operational need of the ranch. The majority of our prescribed fire effort is part of an ongoing study being conducted in partnership with Dr. Sandra Rideout of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. Together we designed an operational-scale, long-term patch-burn grazing project on the Foundation's El Sauz Ranch in Willacy and Kenedy counties (Figure 1). Objectives of this study include better understanding the effects of prescribed fire on pollinators, soil carbon, native and invasive plant species, as well as to test different seasons and return interval of applying fire to the landscape.

In the upcoming year, we plan to burn roughly 4,500 acres across the Santa Rosa, San Antonio Viejo, and El Sauz ranches. These burns coincide with ongoing research as well as rangeland and habitat management.

By reintroducing this once-common natural process, prescribed fire helps sustain the ecological integrity of South Texas rangelands like those stewarded by the East Foundation. On the El Sauz Ranch and beyond, the Foundation's intentional prescribed burning program is supporting biodiversity conservation and science-based land stewardship. ◊

10 YEARS of BEHIND THE GATES FIELD DAYS

ELISA VELADOR

Behind The Gates cont.

One facet of Behind the Gates is our weeklong events that happen at El Sauz Ranch with IDEA Public Schools 5th graders and at the San Antonio Viejo Ranch with 8th graders from the local school districts. Since the first groups visited the ranches in 2014 and 2016 respectively, we have hosted over 21,000 students along with their teachers on East Foundation lands. These Field Days allow students the unique opportunity to spend the day out at the ranch and learn about our cattle operation, endangered ocelots, animal adaptations, ecosystems, watersheds, and history from our partners and professionals in the natural resources field. Not only do students get to see what a well-managed, working ranch looks like, but they learn about the science behind stewarding this South Texas native rangeland.

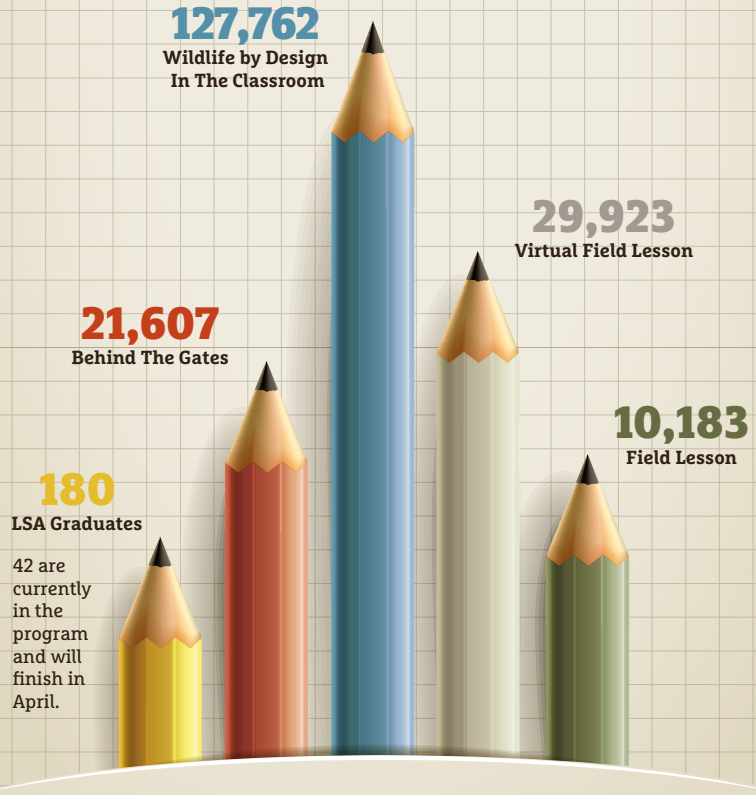
As part of Behind the Gates we also offer smaller, tailored Field Days to South Texas school districts. School groups can request to come out on a Field Day after we have visited their classroom for a presentation. Teachers can choose which lessons and activities they would like for their students to participate in at the ranch depending on grade level and student needs. Since we began offering these Field Days, we have hosted over 10,000 students and their teachers on East Foundation lands. Teachers and administrators continue to see the value in having students learn where their food, fiber, clean air, and water come from and demand for these programs continues to grow.

Ten years ago, the current education centers at the San Antonio Viejo Ranch and at El Sauz Ranch did not exist. These education centers were made possible through the vision and careful planning of East Foundation leadership and through the generous donations of our sponsors. With their grand openings in 2019 and 2022 respectively, these education centers now allow us to host thousands of students annually from near and far, providing the perfect venue to observe native flora and fauna. What makes a Field Day special is that a student might be able to see a cow and its calf, flowers they've never seen before, or catch a glimpse of a deer, javelina, or a green jay all in one day!

Through the years, our Behind the Gates Field Days would not be possible without sponsors,

Education

The East Foundation has been working hard to expand our education opportunities in South Texas, while ensuring that we are developing future land stewards. Our education programs focus on delivering effective programs in the classroom, on the land, and in partnership with like-minded organizations. Since Foundation education programs began in 2014, our educators have reached:



Behind THE GATES EAST FOUNDATION

31,790
On The Land
(Field Lesson + BTG)

157,685
In the Classroom
(VFL + WBD)

donors, partners, and volunteers. It really does take a village to educate students out on the land! With the help of Texas Farm Credit, Elliff Motors, Las Huellas, and other sponsors we have been able to provide these unique experiences to thousands of students. Longtime partners the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Museum of South Texas History, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Texas A&M AgriLife, Texas Wildlife Association, UTRGV-Coastal Studies Lab, IDEA Public Schools, and the Rio Grande Valley Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists have all supported us in our efforts. We are extremely grateful to everyone involved in making these Field Days a reality and we look forward to the growth and further development of our programs and to the next 10 years to come!

SCIENCE AT WORK

ASHLEY REEVES

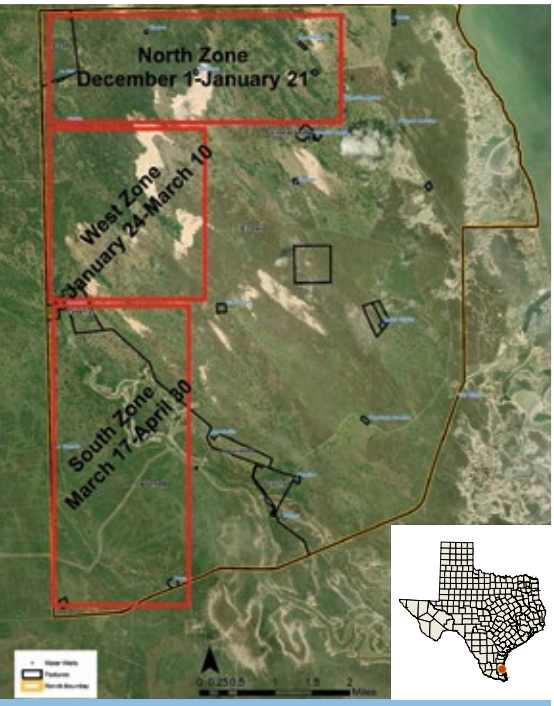
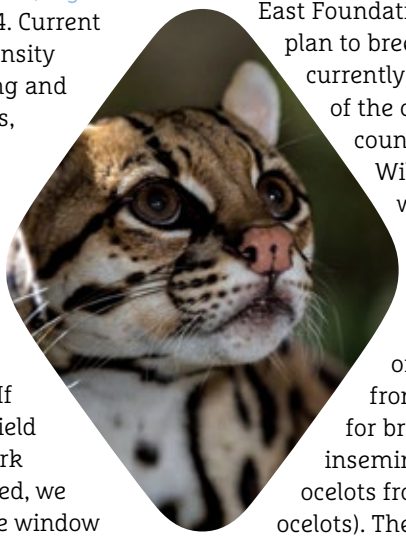


Figure 1 El Sauz Ranch trapping zones and dates for the 2023-20024 carnivore trapping season.

Figure 2 Carnivore capture team collecting biological samples and fitting a GPS collar to a male ocelot on El Sauz Ranch during the 2023-2024 capture season. Photo Credit: Jim Neugebauer, CKWRI.

Ocelot trapping efforts are underway for the 2023-2024 field season! The season starts by hiring technicians, purchasing supplies, and preparing research objectives and procedures. We identify our 50 trapping sites at El Sauz Ranch and rotate these sites every six to seven weeks to cover three trapping zones (North, West, and South; Figure 1) from December 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. Current research objectives include ocelot and bobcat density estimation; parasite and disease presence among and between overlapping carnivores (bobcats, ocelots, coyotes); habitat selection, home range size and kitten survival of bobcats and ocelots; ocelot genetic relationships; and anesthetic protocols for the application of assisted reproductive technology deployment in field settings.



Every morning, our technicians check the traps for captured animals and release all that are not our targets – ocelots, bobcats, or coyotes. If there is a captured target species, they alert the field team in Kingsville, and everyone mobilizes to work up the animal(s). When a target species is captured, we administer an anesthetic to allow for a 40-minute window of sample collection and ensure human and animal safety. Our sample collection and field procedures (Figure 2) include blood, hair, ectoparasites (fleas and ticks), feces, body measurements, weight, age estimation, photographs, GPS/VHF collar placement, semen collection in males, abdominal ultrasonography for pregnancy detection in females, placement of a VetCorder for anesthetic vital measurements, oxygen supplementation via facemask, PIT tag application, and subcutaneous fluid administration for hydration. We then wake the animal up by administering a partial reversal of the anesthesia and allow the animal to recover in a large dog crate before being released back onto the landscape in the capture area.

This effort is contributing to the recovery of ocelots in Texas. East Foundation and our partners have developed a plan to breed and reintroduce ocelots into historic, but currently uninhabited habitat further inland and west of the coastal populations in Willacy and Cameron counties and the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. Recently, our team worked with an architecture firm and Texas A&M University- Kingsville's facilities team to design a facility that would enable ocelot breeding, kitten rearing, and conditioning of wild behaviors in hopes of releasing offspring in the future. Once built, ocelots from zoos would be relocated to this facility for breeding (natural and assisted (artificial insemination, embryo transfer, etc.)) with wild ocelots from Texas and north of Panama ("northern" ocelots). The potential released animals would be 75% northern ocelot and the other 25% would be from ocelots that were maintained in zoo settings, increasing genetic diversity of our released population to promote their survival long-term and mitigate inbreeding. The information we are gaining from the ocelot trapping efforts is vital to the recovery program and our field efforts are directly impacting the design and implementation of the recovery program.

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