



**AUGUST 2021**

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

## FROM THE CEO

### A Connection to Land

NEAL WILKINS

At both the San Antonio Viejo and El Sauz ranches, we have living quarters that are often fully occupied by graduate scientists, university interns, and field crews. These future scientists and managers are all, in one way or another, involved in our various research projects. For months-at-a-time, they live and work on the ranches – and the license plates from Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, Louisiana, and Oklahoma attest to the fact that most of them are in new and often unfamiliar territory. For a few, the heat and harsh field conditions are enough that they decide against ever working in South Texas again. For most, however, these future professionals seem to fall in love with the vegetation, wildlife, and the environment of a working ranch. Over several months they gain an attachment to the land and its unique features. This attachment is strong enough that, when their time at the ranch is over, the connection is not easily forgotten.



For developing future leaders, a connection to the land is important. When combined with solid scientific training, a connection to the land is critical for building scientists that are also effective at getting their work applied on the ground.

In this issue of our newsletter, you will read about our efforts to produce future leaders as wildlife biologists, range scientists, and ranch managers. East Foundation invests heavily in university programs that equip and train graduate students to become excellent scientists and managers. We commonly point at this investment in training graduate scientists as one of the means for meeting our goal of **developing the next generation of leaders**. But is traditional graduate training

enough? In addition to their technical training, do we need our scientists to have a deep-rooted understanding of ranching, wildlife conservation, and private land stewardship? If we do, then how is that to happen?

The question is this: Does our investment in equipping and training students inevitably produce these scientist-leaders? Not necessarily – in other words, knowing the science and its application is simply not enough. I argue that those scientists that **develop a close connection to the land**

are ultimately the most effective leaders. Scientist-leaders who form a connection to the land are more likely to direct the purpose of their work toward something larger than their academic interests. In other words, a wildlife biologist or range scientist that has a connection to the land is more likely to care about the on-the-ground application of their work. Consequently, they seek more than mere scientific credentials. These scientist-leaders are more likely to care enough about





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## 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

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their work's applications that they learn to intentionally translate their scientific findings in a way that can be best used by land managers and policymakers.

So how do we assure that some of our scientists develop a close connection to the land? The first step is quite simple; and that is to become attached to a specific place – the El Sauz Ranch, for example. Attachment to a specific place can come from living and working on that land. Through day-to-day experiences and observations on a piece of land, some people (but not all people) become so familiar with the plants, animals, and places that they become passionately attached to that piece of creation. Once attached to a piece of land, it is easier to expand that connection to a more general idea of land, and land stewardship.

As an example, after living and working on a specific ranch in South Texas, it is easier to transfer that connection to the rangelands of the entire region. This connection to a region's

rangeland can lead to an interest in the land use history. Once connected to both the past and present conditions of the land, a scientist is more likely to care about the future of that land – Aldo Leopold generally described this as a Land Ethic. In our business, those that are future leaders must be rooted in a connection to the land.

*"No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care."*

Theodore Roosevelt



At East Foundation, our land is one of our most important assets. Our land's health is essential for producing wildlife habitat and rangeland for beef cattle production. But it is also essential for producing future scientists and managers who are connected to the land.



Image by Emily McCartney

# Investing in Future Professionals

TYLER CAMPBELL

East Foundation invests in future professionals through internships, graduate assistantships, and close engagement with university programs. Our underlying goal is to produce more science-minded managers and more management-minded scientists that are grounded in applied land stewardship principles and practices.

Through our graduate programs we partner with various universities, institutes, and departments, including Texas A&M University, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, and King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management.

Our graduate research projects focus on wildlife conservation and management, land management practices, forage dynamics, and drought. Specific research projects include work on white-tailed deer, ocelots, coyotes, bobwhite quail, nilgai, prescribed fire, cattle grazing relationships, soil carbon storage, and endangered species policy.

We are currently working with 16 graduate students – 10 master of

science students and six doctor of philosophy students. Eleven of our graduate students attend Texas A&M University-Kingsville and five are students at Texas A&M University. Our graduate students come from all over North America, including Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Mexico, Mississippi, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas.

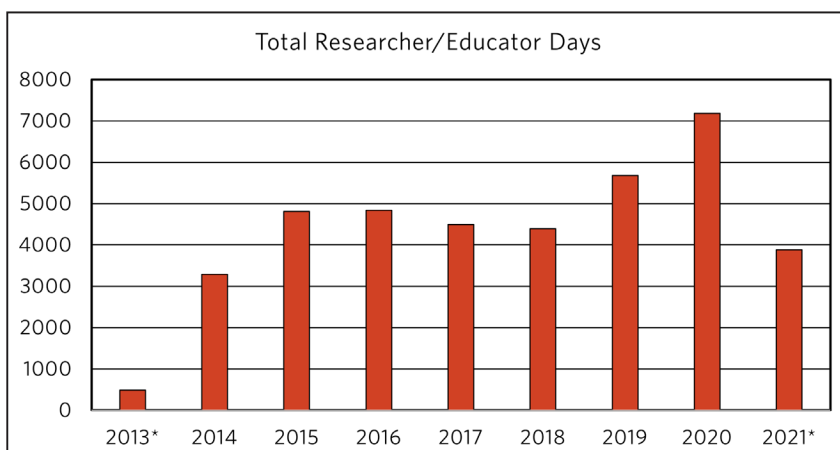
An important measure of graduate program success is marketability and employment following graduation. Our alumni are currently working across the country for a diverse group of organizations, including:

- California State Polytechnic University-Pomona
- Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute
- Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands
- Colorado State University
- East Foundation
- Five Rivers MetroParks, Dayton, Ohio
- International Crane Foundation
- Johnson Engineering, Inc.

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Zoo
- Mississippi State University
- Natural Heritage New Mexico
- Sooner Cattle Company
- Sul Ross State University
- SWCA Environmental Consultants
- Texas A&M University
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- United States Forest Service
- United States Geological Survey
- University of Wyoming
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

East Foundation continually seeks to identify and recruit talented undergraduate students into our graduate program. We provide opportunities for young, up-and-coming scientists and managers to gain real-world experience and skills to compete in the job market through our internship program, other temporary technical positions, and volunteer opportunities. For example, Lindsay Martinez, one of our newest graduate students at the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, began with us as an intern – and she is now leading a graduate research project focused on developing and assessing strategies for reintroducing ocelots in South Texas.

Lindsay, and others like her, are great examples of the skilled and experienced future professionals who will be associated with the East Foundation brand throughout their careers.



Total researcher (graduate students, technicians, interns, and faculty) and educator days on East Foundation lands from 2013 to 2021.



## FROM THE RANCH

# A Culture of Ownership

ZANE HERRIN

East Foundation does “what’s right for the land and the life that depends on it,” while promoting “the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education.” We truly believe these statements, so if we develop people who promote land stewardship, regardless of location or employer throughout their career, we are doing our job. However, we also try to retain high-level people at the Foundation when practical. In either case, we are intentional about developing people and making an impact on those with whom we interact.

On the ranches, we have put together a group of young, skilled, and motivated professionals that push each other while learning from the older cowboys and ranch hands. This was intentional. We are striving to create a culture of excellence, so we need people who hold high standards.

There is a well-known and comical saying, “It’s hard to soar with eagles when you’re surrounded by turkeys.” Although funny, it is true. Motivated people surround themselves with others that are more talented, harder working, and more experienced so that they can grow. We’ve done just that on the East Foundation ranches.

With the right team and a culture of excellence, the other important component we provide our team are opportunities, which are offered in a variety of ways. We’ve fostered a culture of ownership. Our unit foremen “own” their units – soil, grass, infrastructure, and cattle.

During daily operations on the ranch, people find themselves

in ownership situations where they have the latitude to make decisions, and then succeed or fail. Through both outcomes, people grow, especially when coupled with meaningful feedback. The feedback of highest value doesn’t come from organized meetings. It comes candidly, through an open line of communication with immediate reward, explanation, or redirection.



Image by Emily McCartney

Cesar Salinas, pictured left, is the Unit Foreman for our Santa Rosa Ranch. Day-to-day, Cesar oversees cattle operations at Santa Rosa, but when it’s time to work cattle there, the whole crew comes through to support him, including Zach Herrin and Molli Foxley, who manages the Coloraditas on San Antonio Viejo and Ranchito.

Organized growth opportunities occur through educational events. We believe strongly in further education, and we have key partners that hold quality events. East Foundation ranches personnel attend annual conventions of Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and National Cattleman’s Beef Association, which, respectively, hold the School for Successful Ranching and Cattleman’s College. Texas A&M provides events such as Beef Cattle Short Course and Beef 706. We also send people to the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management’s

lectureships and symposia. CattleFax also provides learning opportunities. The networking opportunities at these events are invaluable to our future leaders.

At a more introductory level, the East Foundation ranch management internship has allowed us to make positive impacts on several college students and graduates.

Our internship alumni now serve in diverse but important roles in Texas and across the country. Some are managing large ranches while others are making an impact through research or agricultural finance. Through experience and networking, several interns had the opportunity to complete the Ranch Management program at Texas Christian University.

Our team at East Foundation ranches naturally pushes each other to become leaders. On top of that, our internship program allows us to put our brand on high quality people early in their careers.

Through our investment in people, we are making an impact on land stewardship that extends far past our fences.



## ALUMNI PROFILE



FAITH HARDIN

Faith grew up in the mountains of upstate New York, where she developed a love of the outdoors through camping and hiking trips. She graduated from the State University of New York at Oneonta, with a degree in Biology. After graduation she worked around the country as a wildlife technician, conducting work including counting Karner blue butterflies in New York, experimenting with the impact prairie dogs have on grassland ecosystems in New Mexico, and studying overwintering effects on white-tailed deer and black bears in Maine.

In 2018, she started her M.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries at Texas A&M. Her thesis focused on bird ecosystems on the East Foundation's San Antonio Viejo Ranch, specifically researching how the cavities left behind by woodpeckers can benefit other bird species who require cavities to nest in (secondary cavity nesters).

Her study showed that secondary cavity nesters (including eastern screech owls, Bewick's wrens, and several species of flycatchers) had a higher number of eggs and surviving chicks when nesting inside the more uniformly

shaped woodpecker-excavated cavities than when nesting in irregular decay formed cavities. The management take home message from her study is that mature, moderately decayed trees (e.g., bull mesquite) are a significant source of nesting habitat for woodpeckers and secondary cavity nesters, some of which are species of conservation concern.

Faith is now a Ph.D. student in the Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior Program at the University of Illinois. Her research focuses on the neurological and chemical structures of parental care, using poison frogs as a model system.

### In her own words:

Working solo on the expansive San Antonio Viejo Ranch, running into rattlesnakes, angry bulls, and angrier cacti gave me a confidence in backcountry work I didn't have before. I also valued the education programs that overlapped with my time on the ranch, and the opportunity to share my research with visiting elementary students. Though science is my passion, I believe that educating the public is incredibly important for creating a new generation of conservation and sustainable land management-minded adults.

## Upcoming Events

### AUGUST 27

Masi Mejia presented "Using East Foundation's Ranchlands to Educate Students About the Land and the Life That Depends on It" at the World MENSA Conference in Houston.

### SEPTEMBER 12

Desert Door/Ocotillo film premiere of *Easteños: True Cowboys of the Wild Horse Desert* featuring cowboys Timo and Miguel Rodriguez and Zane Herrin in San Antonio at the Hotel Emma.

### SEPTEMBER 13

*Deep in the Heart* film screening at the Santikos Galaxy in San Antonio.

### SEPTEMBER 21

Masi Mejia will present at the Texas A&M Student Chapter of the National Association of Environmental Professionals.

### SEPTEMBER 23

*Deep in the Heart* film screening at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center in Houston.

### SEPTEMBER 24

Education Pavilion Groundbreaking and Staff Day at El Sauz Ranch.

## Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER 24

East Foundation will host the Texas Association for Environmental Education field trip at El Sauz Ranch.

OCTOBER 3

Desert Door/Ocotillo film premiere of *Easteños: True Cowboys of the Wild Horse Desert* featuring cowboys Timo and Miguel Rodriguez and Zane Herrin in Houston at the King Ranch Restaurant.

OCTOBER 4-6

Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Meeting and Booth Expo in Round Rock.

OCTOBER 14

South Texans' Property Rights Association Meeting and Fundraiser in Encino.

OCTOBER 14-15

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Holt Cat Symposium on Excellence in Ranch Management in Kingsville.

OCTOBER 16

National Ranching Heritage Annual Meeting Chuck Wagon Breakfast in Lubbock.

OCTOBER 20-22

Society for Range Management Annual Meeting in Victoria.

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### IDEA Public Schools

TINA BUFORD

Great partnerships are not born in a day, a week, a month or even in a year. They take time to realize their full potential so they may accomplish more together than any one of them could do alone. This is the case with our IDEA Public Schools partnership. Both IDEA and East Foundation share the goal of working in underserved communities identifying and preparing the next generation of leaders for South Texas.

IDEA prepares students within the classroom for success in college and beyond changing the educational landscape across South Texas. IDEA stands for "Individuals Dedicated to Excellence and Achievement," and their motto is "No Excuses!" which explains why they have had 100 percent of their graduating seniors college bound for 15 years in a row.

Since 2014, we have hosted more than 8,000 fifth graders from across their Rio Grande Valley campuses on our El Sauz ranch during Behind the Gates field lessons.

In 2018, we designed an adventure-based, stewardship curriculum to be deployed at their Camp Rio location, impacting approximately 15,000 students annually. In 2019, we began a longitudinal research and evaluation study measuring the impact of the adventure-based stewardship curriculum on students' academic success and attitudes towards conservation and stewardship. In 2021, seven of the 45 students who participated in our Land Stewardship Ambassador program were IDEA students.

We look forward to our continued partnership in preparing the next generation of leaders for South Texas!



## Key Research Questions



Do students who participate in adventure-based, stewardship programming at Camp RIO show increased interest in and more positive attitudes towards environmental stewardship and conservation?



Are students who participate in Camp RIO programming reporting measurably increased well-being, or enhanced engagement in learning?



How is student participation in Camp RIO associated with academic achievement, college enrollment and overall student success?

# Translating Research Results

TODD SNELGROVE

At the East Foundation, we promote the advancement of land stewardship through ranching, science, and education. We do this by actively maintaining our legacy, supporting conservation, and impacting the future. For example, our applied research and professional development programs are intentionally designed to have an impact on the future by engaging with graduate students and enhancing their academic experience.

The goal of our applied research program is to generate practical solutions grounded in good science to help ranchers and other landowners better conserve wildlife populations and habitat while also improving and sustaining livestock production. To achieve that goal, we operate our lands as both a working ranch and a living laboratory actively partnering with faculty at Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University-Kingsville in addition to other university partners.

In any given year, 10 to 12 graduate students conduct research on our ranches as part of their master and doctoral programs. In addition to accumulating in-depth knowledge of their research topic, through their academic studies graduate students learn about the research process, how to formulate and test a hypothesis, employ rigorous data collection standards, analyze the results, and interpret the outcomes. These are all important attributes for future science-minded managers and management-minded scientists. However, one critical skill is often lacking in their academic experience—the ability

to translate those results to folks outside academia. To help develop those skills the East Foundation started hosting a Three Minute Thesis competition in 2017.



The Three Minute Thesis (3MT) is a research communication competition developed in 2008 by the University of Queensland, Australia. Since then, it has grown to over 900 universities and research organizations in 85 countries. It challenges our graduate students to make an impactful three-minute presentation using no props and only a single slide on their research topic and its significance. Keep in mind, a Ph.D. dissertation can be over 90,000 words in length, so the format of 3MT drives students to communicate complex ideas in a crisp and concise manner. They also must tailor their presentation to a non-academic audience—one that is knowledgeable but does not share the same deep and intimate understanding of a complex research topic. On top of that, the best presentations clearly answer the “so what?” and “who cares?” questions.

What’s the value to our students? Beyond a cash prize for the winners, students who participate hone their presentation skills. More importantly, they sharpen their ability to translate their research and communicate its relevance outside the halls of academia—a skill that will serve them well in

the future. In our observation, this ultimately makes them more employable and sets them on a career path with a higher trajectory.

In 2021, we added a new wrinkle to our annual 3MT competition—a short, moderated question and answer session for our Proposed Research category. Students presented a 3MT on a research proposal and then took questions from a panel of judges—all ranching, education, wildlife, and natural resources professionals. This addition further enhances the experience for our students and enables them to hone additional skills they will use once they enter the workforce.

At the East Foundation we are committed to providing a graduate education experience that is superior to any other. We do this by conducting research through the lens of a working ranch so graduate students have an appreciation for the relevance of their work. This in turn helps them understand the importance of translating the results of their research beyond the college campus. The 3MT competition is proving to be a useful venue to meet our goal to develop more science-minded managers and management-minded scientists with the skills to effectively communicate research-based, practical solutions.

For more information about the East Foundation 3MT and to view past winners visit: <https://www.eastfoundation.net/science/three-minute-thesis-3mt/>



## EMPLOYEE PROFILE



GARRETT STRIBLING

A native Texan, Garrett Stribling was born and raised in Scurry, Texas. Growing up he always had a passion for agriculture, working on a commercial cow-calf and hay operation through high school.

Garrett has a B.S. in Animal Science from Texas A&M University and a M.S. in Ranch Management from the King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Prior to joining us at East Foundation, he spent three years as Manager of Cattle Operations for 44 Farms in Cameron, Texas.

As a Unit Foreman at San Antonio Viejo, Garrett is responsible for day-to-day livestock management and rangeland management, and he assists our Area Foreman and Director of Livestock Operations with additional projects.

Garrett is passionate about the cattle industry, especially stewardship of livestock and land. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family as well as hunting and fishing. Garrett lives on the San Antonio Viejo with his wife and daughter.

## EDUCATION INSIGHTS

### Fostering Natural Resource Professionals

MASI MEJIA

The East Foundation's education program is a multitiered approach that values both reaching K-12 students with an introduction to land stewardship principals, as well as fostering a subset of those students to become the next natural resource professionals.

To reach students throughout South Texas, we partnered with the Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) to take natural resource curriculum into the classroom. Since 2014, we have impacted more than 100,000 students in South Texas! Drawing from that educational experience, we then offered students the opportunity to spend time on our ranches, in person, for a chance to interact directly with our wildlife and cattle professionals. To date, we have hosted close to 19,000 students on East Foundation ranchlands.

Using this model, we had the chance to reach students twice within their academic career. However, in order to mentor students into becoming future land stewardship professionals, we knew there was another step needed. In partnership with the Witte Museum and Texas Farm Credit we designed the Land Stewardship Ambassador program.

The Land Stewardship Ambassador program is a 10-week, interactive journey with goals to increase awareness of land stewardship principles, promote civic engagement in today's youth, and inspire students to pursue careers that support land stewardship.

Our multitiered education approach has shown early success. One student, Carlos

Romanos, comes to mind. Carlos applied to and was selected to join our 2019 Land Stewardship Ambassadors cohort, where he showed a strong interest in agriculture. It was there he learned about an opportunity to work as a seasonal Rangeland Technician on our San Antonio Viejo Ranch. He gained hands-on experience in the field and is now pursuing a degree at Texas A&M University-Kingsville in Wildlife Management. Carlos is a shining example of one of our students whom we have mentored through the wildlife and ranching educational pipeline. We are confident that he will continue to make strides and connections to further his success.

While we know that only a handful of these students will pursue careers directly related to ranching and wildlife conservation, we are confident that connecting with students in the classroom and out on the land has equipped them with an awareness and appreciation of land stewardship principles. The value of this multi-tiered approach is qualitatively positive as seen in students like Carlos Romanos!



Carlos Romanos a 2019 LSA alumni and Kassandra Rodriguez a 2021 LSA alumni from the Webb County cohort will both be pursuing degrees at Texas A&M University Kingsville in the Dick and Mary Lewis Kleberg College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



## RAINFALL REPORT

# Looks Like Rain

ALLIE BIEDENHARN

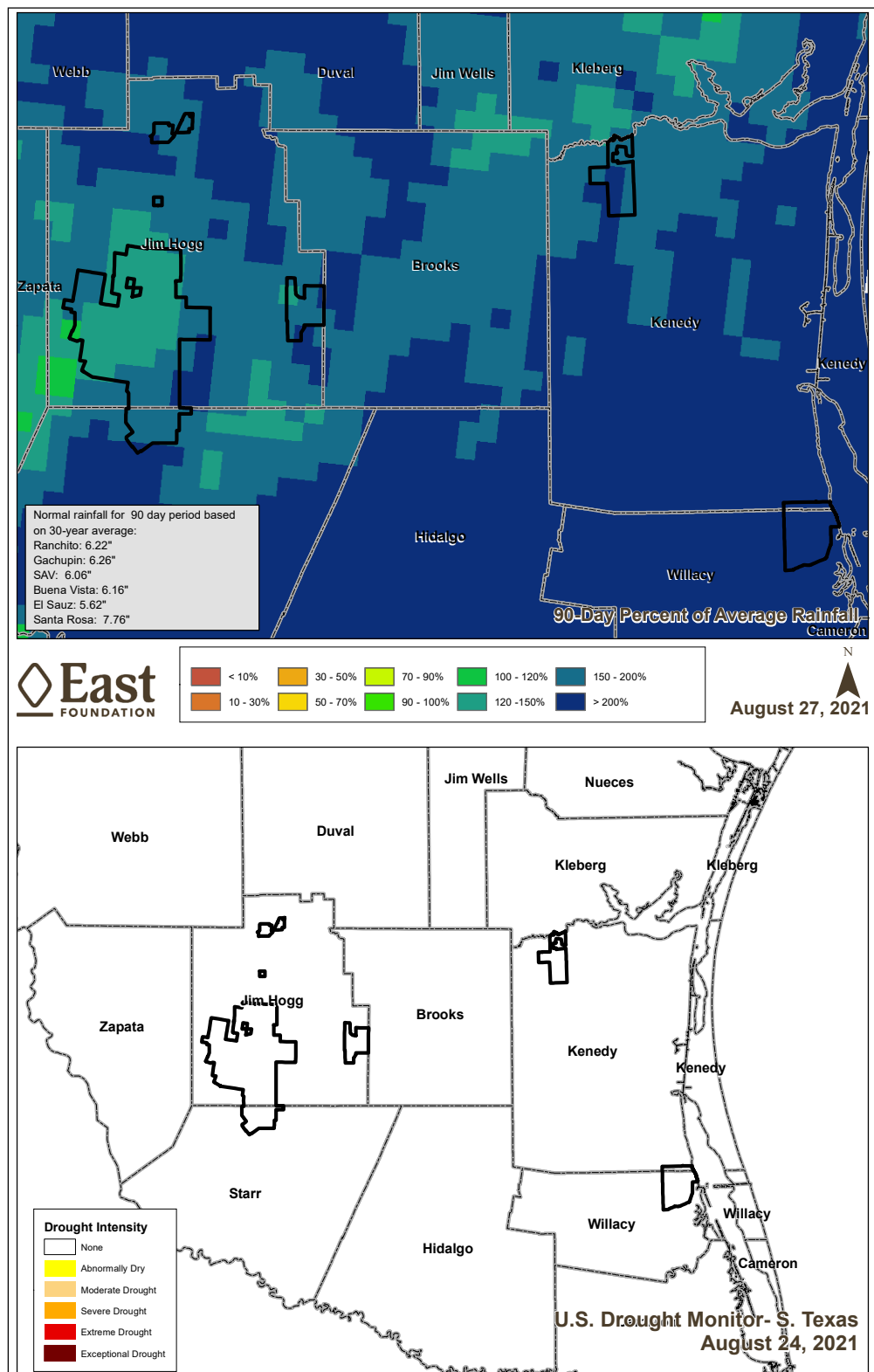
The drought map to the left is correct—the drought intensity level in South Texas is none!

South Texas has had a fortunate summer, with many areas receiving well over 100% of the normal rainfall amounts in the last 90 days. Through the summer, the rangelands have been productive, and the grass has been growing.

The San Antonio Viejo ranch has received well over the average rainfall amount with most units collecting seven to 10 inches through the past three months. We are constantly tracking rainfall trends helping us to be better stewards of the land and to guide our management decisions.

Over on the coast, El Sauz has accumulated about 15 to 20 inches throughout the summer. This is well over double the amount of the normal seasonal rainfall.

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/>.





## SECURITY REPORT

# Securing the South Texas Sand Sheet

MATT ROBINSON

Currently, there are a lot of immigrants walking through our properties. Undocumented aliens are coming from many places, but the majority are from Central America – namely, Honduras and Guatemala. They are coming for many reasons, but basically for a better life in the United States.

After speaking with many I have determined that if I were in their position, I would try to come to the United States as well. These immigrants are labeled criminals because they are entering our property and the United States illegally. Many times, they are causing damage and making us feel unsafe on our own properties. In most cases, they are guided by a criminal element, but they themselves are typically good people attempting to escape bad situations. Unfortunately, they are naive and are being manipulated by criminal traffickers. Many of these people suffer greatly, and some even die making this trip.

Our Border Patrol agents are in a tough position. They are compassionate men and women but are sworn to enforce the law and protect our borders. I personally know they work very hard in uncomfortable conditions, often risking their health and life to perform their duties. I also spend a lot of time working to catch the smugglers and stop the illegal flow of immigrants through our properties.

Many of the undocumented aliens are turning themselves in at the border, overwhelming the agents tasked with processing the required paperwork. It takes many agents to process, guard,

feed, and care for the people held in the holding facilities. This has caused most field agents stationed in the northern areas (Kingsville, Falfurrias, Hebbronville) to have to go to the stations on the border to assist, leaving fewer agents to staff the interior checkpoints. When I call about a group coming through the ranch, Border Patrol has a tough time sending agents to help. Unfortunately, it seems that the only people profiting from this situation are the cartels and other criminal elements.

I have asked several of the undocumented aliens what they have to pay to be smuggled into the country. They have all advised it costs them nearly \$10,000 to come from Central America. They may be exaggerating, but at any rate, the smugglers are making a large profit. This is what is happening right now and if the poor living conditions continue in the countries to our south, the people will continue to escape to the United States for a better life.

I personally do not have an answer to the problem, but we have many intelligent people in power in the United States. If some of them take a genuine interest, come down here, and see what is really happening, maybe a solution could be found and agreed upon. Except for the smugglers involved, most people on both sides are good, hard-working folks. Let's tell those in power to quit fighting and come up with a solution. We need some help.

### IT TOOK A DOG TO START MY TRUCK

I am the keeper of the keys for the East Foundation ranches. When someone needs to access one of the

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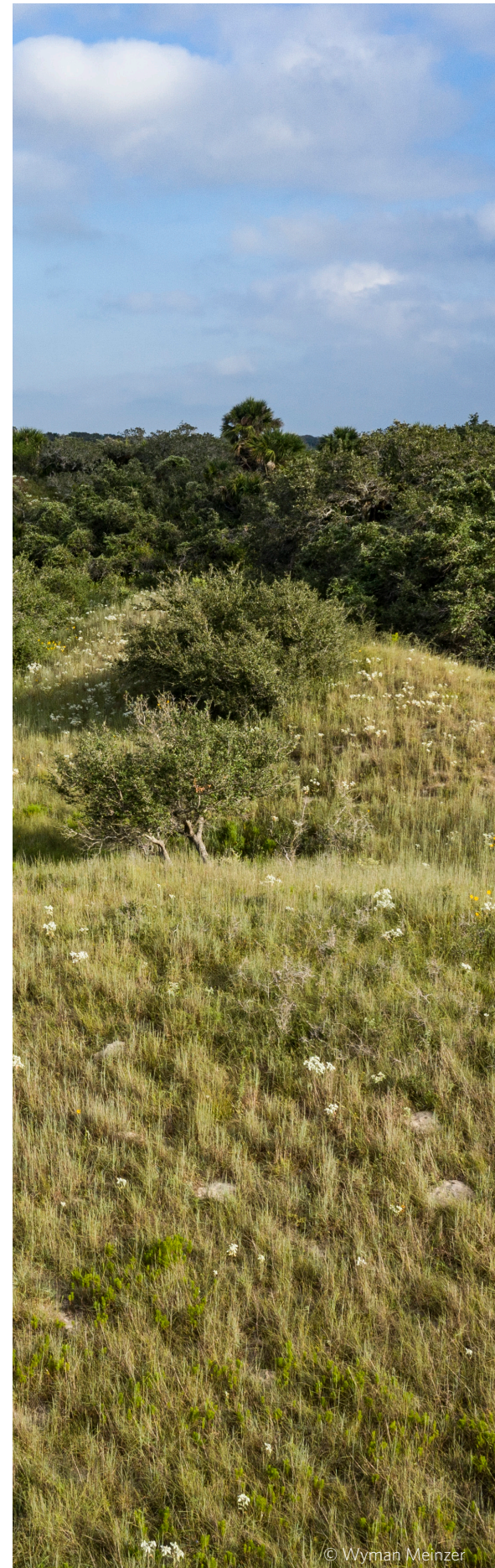
properties, I issue the key required with a stern warning not to lose it. So, when someone loses their key, I usually give them a hard time. I have been known to tie a six-foot fluorescent ribbon to their new key so they will not lose it again. That being said, I lost my truck keys the other day at Santa Rosa. I was in a panic because I didn't have an extra set, the windows were down, rain was coming, and I had guns in the truck that I couldn't lock up properly. But the worst part was everyone would find out that I lost my keys. I carry my keys on a clip on my belt and somehow, they fell off the clip in the area that I had been working that morning. It was a five-acre area with waist-tall grass. I backtracked and retraced my path, but it was no use, I just couldn't find them.

I work with Game Warden K-9 Handler Royce Ilse and his K-9, Rusty, quite often. I thought maybe Rusty could find my keys, so I called Royce, who was busy doing paperwork and not opposed to taking a break from the paperwork to give Rusty some item-search practice. Royce and Rusty showed up and started searching the large area. Rusty located my keys in less than 15 minutes. Below is Rusty looking back at me after finding the keys.

What a blessing it is to have friends that will come to my rescue. I got my keys back and maybe nobody will find out that I lost them. Shhh!!!



Dude, your keys are right here!



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