

# CAESAR KLEBERG Tracks

— A Publication of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute —



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**WILDLIFE**  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY - KINGSVILLE

# CAESAR KLEBERG *Tracks*

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*The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville is a Master's and Ph.D. Program and is the leading wildlife research organization in Texas and one of the finest in the nation. Established in 1981 by a grant from the Caesar Kleberg Foundation for Wildlife Conservation, its mission is to provide science-based information for enhancing the conservation and management of Texas wildlife.*



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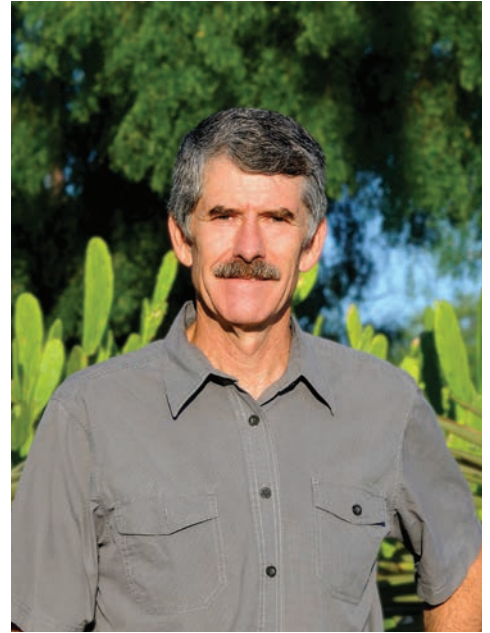


# From the Director

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The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute graduates a dozen M.S. and Ph.D. students every year. Before they leave, I conduct an exit interview to learn from their experiences in the program. My last question is “What was your best experience during your time as a graduate student with CKWRI?” I explain they can define “best” however they like. It may be what they feel would help their career the most, what they enjoyed the most about being in Kingsville, or what they are likely to remember 20 years from now.

I get a range of answers, but one of the most common responses is the opportunities they enjoyed as a graduate student with CKWRI. The graduates explain how much they appreciate being able to help other students on their projects and thereby broaden their experiences beyond what they learn in class and what they did on their own research project. They appreciate the support they received to attend professional meetings in Texas, around the country, and overseas. They describe how much they enjoy the opportunity to interact with Texas landowners and learn about the role of private lands in wildlife conservation. They also realize how special it is for landowners to open their gates and welcome our students onto their property to conduct research. Our graduates are insightful to recognize and appreciate the unique experiences they had at CKWRI.



You will get a sense of the diverse experiences our students have as you read the articles in this issue of *Caesar Kleberg Tracks*. Our students learn to use drones and other cutting-edge technology to measure and manage natural resources. They also learn to use livestock grazing, an ancient and fundamental interaction with the land, to manage wildlife habitat. CKWRI students interact with people like Ellen Temple, whose passion for native plants and restoration is infectious, and are inspired by Ed Randall, who collected waterfowl decoys because of their beauty and connection to the hunt. All these experiences contribute to the success of our alumni. Make sure you read to the end of the magazine. There you will learn about one of our alumni whose experiences at CKWRI help her promote wildlife conservation to students who might not have any other way to learn about it.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hewitt".

Dr. David Hewitt  
*Leroy G. Denman, Jr. Endowed Director of Wildlife Research*




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# The Drone Program at CKWRI: 5 Years in the Skies

*by Humberto L. Perotto-Baldivieso, David G. Hewitt, J. Alfonso Ortega-S., Aaron Foley, Randy DeYoung, Leonard A. Brennan, William P. Kuvlesky, Scott Henke, Fidel Hernández, Evan P. Tanner, Timothy Fulbright, Natasha Bell, and Consuelo C. Donato-Molina.*



**I**T HAS BEEN 5 YEARS SINCE WE STARTED THE DRONE PROGRAM AT THE CAESAR KLEBERG WILDLIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (CKWRI). WE STARTED WITH A SMALL COLLABORATION WITH TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI IN 2017. OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS WE HAVE GROWN TO BECOME A STRONG PROGRAM TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RANGE AND WILDLIFE PROFESSIONALS. WE ARE CURRENTLY TRAINING RANGE AND WILDLIFE STUDENTS IN THE USE OF DRONES AND DRONE DATA TO STUDY, MONITOR, AND EVALUATE A WIDE VARIETY OF APPLIED TOPICS IN WILDLIFE AND RANGELAND SCIENCES.

*Image captured by a drone.*



In October 2017, we were visited by two Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi scientists who conducted our first drone flights at the Hixon Ranch. These were test flights to evaluate the feasibility of incorporating this emerging technology in the toolbox of the Geospatial Technology Laboratory at CKWRI. As a result, we purchased our first drone with a red, green, and blue band camera and we started collecting data in 2D (land cover) and 3D (volume) to determine the potential of using these data sets to assess the composition of vegetation communities at very fine scales and the potential to measure vegetation height.

One of our first projects was conducted by Alexandria DiMaggio. She conducted a pilot project to evaluate flight altitudes to measure forage height and related forage volume along with forage mass. We also mapped pastures with very high resolution (pixel resolution= 0.4 inch) to evaluate the distribution of tanglehead and used the information to delineate plots for prescribed burns. Javier Huerta tested the feasibility of using drones to identify small models of horned lizard, snakes and other reptile specimens using low altitude drone flights.

The results provided by these initial projects and the emergence of drone research in our wildlife program resulted in a faculty conversation with Dr. David Hewitt where we organized how to develop a drone program



*Graduate student, Annalysa Camacho, preparing for a drone flight over the Wildlife Center.*



*Graduate students, Annalysa Camacho and Michael Page, preparing for a drone flight.*



*Graduate students and pilots: Michael Page, Bethany Friesenhahn, and Annalysa Camacho, with visual observer and undergraduate student Melaine Ramirez.*

at CKWRI. The discussion involved identifying the research priorities for the drone program from different faculty perspectives. Among those priorities were forage estimation, thermal ecology, land cover, and spatial patterns. This discussion resulted in a collaborative effort to fund the acquisition of various cameras and drones that would meet CKWRI needs. By 2019, the Drone Program had secured funds with the help of various faculty to acquire two thermal cameras, 3 Matrice 200 series drones, and 2 drones with high-end GPS capabilities. These resources provided the opportunity to collaborate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to get on loan 2 multispectral cameras to work on vegetation spectral indices. By the end of 2019, we had acquired 6 cameras and 6 drones with multiple capabilities and multiple configurations to meet CKWRI research needs.

Our students saw this as a great opportunity to add a new skillset in their professional toolbox. By the end of 2019, CKWRI had 5 students with a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) license to fly drones. Michael Page was our first pilot in 2018 and in 2019, Bethany Friesenhahn, Jesse Exum, Zach Pearson, and Rider Combs obtained their pilot licenses. These students used drones as part of their research and were able to combine drone and satellite imagery to quantify the distribution of mesquite, assess pig damage in cornfields, evaluate the feasibility of conducting wildlife aerial surveys in early hours of the day, and estimate crude protein values of tanglehead. In 2020, Annalysa Camacho became our 6th drone pilot and started studying the spectral signature of 16 species of native bunch grasses using multispectral cameras. The pandemic in 2020 made many activities difficult; however, our pilots were able to safely continue their research by working outdoors and in appropriate conditions indoors. In 2021, Chloe

Bates, Dakota Moberg, Jose Avila, and Lori Massey got their FAA pilot licenses and incorporated drones into their CKWRI research with night aerial wildlife surveys, thermal mapping, and thornscrub community plant identification. By April 2022, we have acquired 5 new drones and 4 students recently earned their pilot licenses. The Drone program has 11 drones and has successfully trained 14 students as drone pilots since we started in 2017. Flying drones safely requires several people collaborating on each flight. CKWRI students work together with their flight missions, data processing, and data analytics.

The work done by our students was the template to write and successfully win a United States Department of Agriculture grant to train the next generation of women pilots. In the next 4 years, we will train 20 women in the use of drones for research in wildlife and rangelands. The goals of this program are two-fold: to provide additional support to existing research projects that require drone technologies at CKWRI and to provide technological training opportunities for underrepresented students within the Natural Resources and Agricultural fields. Our students will fly drones, analyze data, and provide new knowledge to help us address some of the pressing issues that challenge management programs in increasingly dynamic landscapes. Our students are part of a new generation who will incorporate fieldwork, efficient data collection, and data analytics into wildlife and rangelands.

Thanks to the vision of the faculty, the students' passion and hard work, and the support of the landowners and State and Federal Agencies, CKWRI now has a nationally recognized drone program providing a competitive toolbox that will help the next generation of young professionals contribute to the conservation of our natural resources. 🚁



*Graduate student, Lori Massey, checking a landed drone.*



*Students Bethany Friesenhahn and Lori Massey landing a drone in Delta County, TX.*



*Graduate student, Lori Massey, flying a drone.*

# Bobwhite Response to Cattle Grazing in South Texas

by Bradley K. Johnston, J. Alfonso Ortega-S., Leonard A. Brennan, Fidel Hernandez, and Humberto L. Perotto-Baldivieso

For many years, overgrazing was a chronic problem in rangelands in South Texas. The interest of landowners to manage healthy habitats for wildlife species motivated the removal of cattle grazing from many ranches. However, in rainy years, grass cover and density can become too thick for quail and cattle grazing may be used to manipulate the habitat to benefit bobwhites. Range management designed to improve habitat for northern bobwhite generally include reducing brush and increasing herbaceous plant cover. When these techniques are coupled with low cattle stocking rates, it can lead to dense stands of dominant grasses, such as four-flower trichloris (hereafter trichloris). An over-abundance of grass can be just as detrimental as overgrazing. A monoculture of trichloris creates dense vegetation unsuitable for bobwhites while reducing plant species diversity. Remnant grass stubble 10 inches high is optimal for bobwhites and range managers are recommended to remove cattle once this threshold is met.

We conducted a study of cattle grazing as a tool in bobwhite management on the Sweden Ranch, in Duval County, Texas. The objectives of our study are (1) to evaluate the effects of a proper cattle grazing regime to improve bobwhite habitat and (2) develop a management guide documenting how cattle grazing can be used as a tool to reduce the density and cover of dominant grasses allowing higher plant species richness and more usable space for bobwhites. Fred Guthery, a quail scientist who formerly worked at CKWRI, recognized that



*Cattle grazing was used to maintain vegetation stubble height at a maximum of 12 inches to be used by bobwhites.*





bobwhites are adapted to certain habitat structure, but not necessarily any specific species composition. Because cattle grazing can impact vegetation composition, structure, and usability for bobwhites, we expect that grazing will decrease the cover of dominant grasses, increase the number of plant species in the pasture, and increase the density of bobwhite.

The mean annual rainfall on the Sweden Ranch is around 24 inches. The primary land use of the ranch and surrounding properties is for livestock production, in many cases combined with wildlife management for sport hunting. The study area consisted of 2 pastures totaling

~6,000 acres. One pasture served as a control, while the other was grazed to maintain a stubble height of 12 inches, slightly more conservative than the 10 inches of stubble often recommended. The ranch lies within the South Texas Plains ecoregion and is primarily brushland, however both research pastures have been root plowed and contain drastically different vegetation communities compared to neighboring pastures. The primary vegetation is herbaceous; the predominant grass species are four-flowered trichloris and buffelgrass. There are mixed brush mottes spread sporadically across the study areas composed of species such as mesquite, granjeno, and lime prickly ash.

We began grazing on May 22, 2020, with a herd of 228 bred cows which was then increased to 360 cows after re-evaluating the forage availability. The cows

then were removed after 109 days when the desired stubble height was achieved (43% utilization for a stubble height of about 12 inches). The utilization rate is the percent of the herbaceous biomass used, either eaten by the cows or lost due to trampling, other herbivores, or weathering processes. In 2021



*Cattle grazing reduced the height of the vegetation without affecting the availability of quail nesting spots.*

we began grazing on June 4th with 337 stockers. Because vegetation growth by July was outpacing what the cattle could eat, we removed the stockers and added 300 bred cows on July 29, 2021. These cows grazed until November 1, 2021 (a total of 155 days) until the 12 inches stubble height was achieved (utilization rate was 27%).

We did this to maintain a residual grass stubble height of at least 12 inches. Cattle movements within the pasture were also controlled by watering points, which resulted in grazing relatively even across the pasture. We monitored vegetation trends and estimated forage standing crop, percent bare ground, litter and cover of plant species, and the number of plant species in the pasture (also known as species richness). Aerial surveys were conducted in December of each year to census the bobwhite population using distance sampling.

Grazing affected cover of litter (dead vegetation laying on the ground) and grass trichloris as well as percent bare ground. Trichloris cover was reduced in the grazed pasture by 30% compared to the control pasture. Bare ground and litter were 20% and 12% greater in the grazed pasture than on the

control pasture, respectively. Plant species richness showed little difference between the grazed and control pasture. Results from the aerial surveys estimated that there were 60% more bobwhites in the grazed pasture compared with the non-grazed pasture. As we expected, cattle grazing positively affected abundance of bobwhites.

These results indicate that cattle grazing can be used as a tool to manage vegetation in a way to benefit bobwhites. By reducing the cover and density of trichloris and increasing bare ground, we increased the production of early successional plants, such as annual forbs and grasses, that are desirable for bobwhites because they produce foods and nesting cover. Reducing trichloris cover allows space for

other plants to proliferate and opens space for bobwhites to use. Overall, we hope that by changing the structure and composition of the vegetation we can increase the usable area available to bobwhites.

The results of this study are very promising. A future goal is to provide a guide on managing bobwhite habitat using livestock grazing. Specifically, a management guide to apply grazing in such a way to improve usability of habitat space for bobwhites would be particularly useful for land managers on rangelands in South Texas. Such a guide could benefit other wildlife as well. ↓

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*Availability of bare ground and proper stubble height in the grazed pasture positively affected bobwhite density as compared to the ungrazed pasture.*







# The Role of DMP in TEXAS Deer Management

*by Joseph Hediger, Cole Anderson,  
Randy DeYoung, and Michael Cherry*

The quest for healthier, heavier, and larger antlered game is a common thread amongst hunters, managers, and researchers. This quest dates back to medieval times when large antlers were exchanged as gifts between royal families. The deer during this period were much larger than contemporary deer. It was Franz Vogt, a German chemist, who recognized this discrepancy and sought to produce mature male deer with body and antler sizes that surpassed the record trophies preserved in the German Mortizburg collection. His approach was novel but straight forward: provide exceptional nutrition that meets metabolic requirements in a relatively low risk environment. His results were astounding. Each of his deer equaled or surpassed the antler mass and body size of almost every deer harvested in Europe several centuries previous. Although his deer did not best the record deer in the German Mortizburg collection, Vogt's research was cut short due to World War II, thus preventing his 3rd generation deer from reaching maximum antler and body size potential.

*Photo by Breanna Green*



Photo by Dr. Randy DeYoung

In Texas, a management method that has the potential to produce a “Vogt effect” is a Deer Management Permit (DMP). This permit allows owners and managers of high-fenced properties to contain wild white-tailed deer within a defined enclosure on their property for the purpose of natural breeding. Desire for managing which bucks reproduce within a population increased following the revelation that many different bucks sire fawns. This realization challenged the long-held belief that larger, more dominant bucks monopolize breeding. The motivation behind the DMP program is rooted in managers seeking more control over which deer reproduce on their property. For instance, fawn-rearing success increases with experience and age; therefore, selecting a mature female would be prudent. Body size and antler characteristics are the major determinants for selecting a particular mature male. Coincidentally, these attributes are highly heritable.

Although selection was the primary motivation behind the development of DMP, that alone would not be sufficient to reproduce the “Vogt effect”. Remember, Franz Vogt designed his experiment to provide his deer a relatively risk-free environment through abundance of nutrition and the absence of predators. Generations of Vogt’s deer were born, raised, and reproduced in this highly favorable environment. This resulted in a “silver spoon effect”. This is an effect common amongst species when individuals born into favorable conditions have an inherent advantage over those that are born into less favorable conditions.

The mechanism behind the “silver spoon effect” is found at the level of the genetic code. Within a cell resides chromosomes that contain all of an animal’s genetic material and sequencing. In response to environmental triggers, a cascade of events occurs within the cell, facilitating adaptations to the chromosomes. The end result is a change in phenotypic expression without changing the genetic sequence, a process termed “epigenetics”. In ungulates, conditions experienced during the year of birth and those of their grandmothers, two generations prior, influence adult body size.

The generational effect witnessed with epigenetics can also be described as transgenerational plasticity (TGP). TGP occurs when the environment encountered by one generation alters the phenotypes of subsequent generations. It is an adaptive advantage of an organism to prepare future offspring for the environment they will be exposed to throughout their life. In humans, grandchildren of individu-



Photo by Breanna Green

als exposed to famine in-utero were more likely to be obese, thus predisposing them to chronic diseases. In three-spined stickleback, a species of fish, offspring whose grandfathers were exposed to predators had reduced predator defense behavior and were larger in body size. Unlike Vogt's experiment, DMP-raised fawns are released from their enclosure into an environment very different from the one they grew up in. The pasture is a novel environment that requires them to search for food, compete with rivals, and avoid predators to survive. A similar scenario is seen with species reintroductions. For instance, animals that are born in captivity and released into the wild are far less likely to survive when compared to wild caught animals.

By understanding the ecological drivers within a Deer Management Permit enclosure, managers and researchers have the potential to drastically improve antler phenotypes of white-tailed deer. Such results were demonstrated by Franz Vogt, although, the long-term implications for such a management strategy are unknown. Based upon species rein-

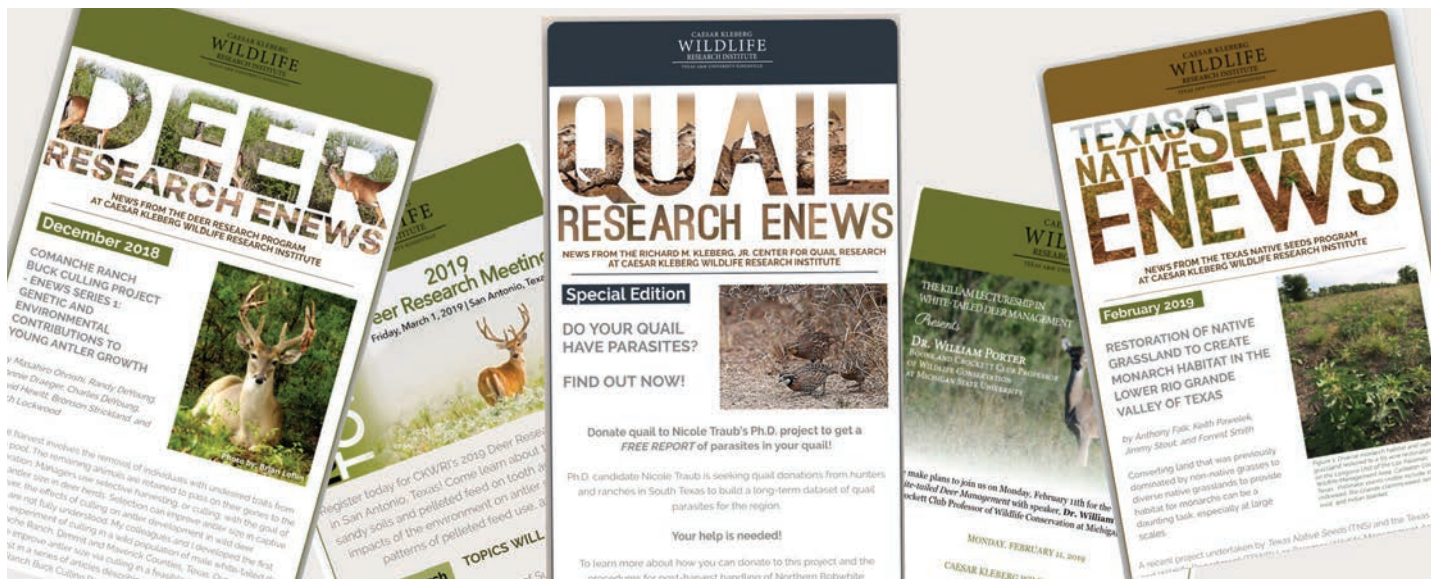
troduction studies, it is possible that DMP-raised individuals may have more desirable antler phenotypes but are less likely to survive long-term. Clearly, research in this area is needed to appropriately guide management decisions pertaining to DMP. For additional information about the laws and regulations of Deer Management Permits, contact Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. 🐾

For a complete bibliography of this article, please visit:  
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# Donor Spotlight: *Ellen Temple*

**E**llen Temple is a spreader of seeds and a lover of the land. Both are endeavors that she's dedicated her life to. She and her late husband, Buddy Temple, III, were "totally tied to the land." As one granddaughter described them, "Nana is a flora woman, and Pop is a fauna person" and the two go hand in hand. "You can't have the animals, and the insects without the plants," says Ellen.

The Temples came to be acquainted through a mutual friend. They had a few dates their freshman year at the University of Texas, but ultimately went their separate ways. It wasn't until later when she, a widow of the Vietnam War with a child, and Buddy, divorced with a child, came back together. They merged their two families in 1970.

Their families had timber in common. Buddy's family had been in the timber business for more than 100 years. Southern Pine Lumber Company, which later became Temple Industries, was established in 1893.

Ellen's dad was in the papermaking industry. Specifically, he ran the mills for some big name paper

companies including International, Kimberly Clark and ultimately Southerland Paper in Lufkin.

Ellen was born in Arkansas but lived in Wisconsin, Canada and Alabama before the family moved to Lufkin in 1955. It was in East Texas among the pines that she spent her formative years. Some 67 years later, it is here that she still calls home.

Ellen grew up outdoors. Her parents took their children hiking and paddling, and in the summers they attended scout camp. She attributes her appreciation of the beauty of the wildflowers and the different plants of each region to her mother.

"My mother never had any plastic plants in the house," Ellen recalls. "We grew up with our Christmas decorations; we would have a real tree and big vases of yaupons and American holly boughs - anything with red berries - and that would be our Christmas decorations."

As she grew and traveled, Ellen says she loved identifying with the flora of that place. As she explains, the flora captures the spirit of a place. It wasn't just



*Photo by Jonathan Gerland*





timber that the two had in common though. They also had a love of the land and the outdoors. Buddy had grown up deer and quail hunting in South Texas, and he shared that love of South Texas with his new family. One of the first gifts he gave Ellen was a shotgun. “I never did deer hunt, but I learned to love bird hunting,” says Ellen.

In 1992 they bought a ranch in Duvall County in South Texas. It was overgrown with mesquite and prickly pear and the native grasses were few and far between. It needed lots of care and the Temples set out to give the land just that. Buddy purchased a roller chopper, affectionately known as the “green monster”. He spent hours knocking down the heavy brush. That was followed with some prescribed fires all in an effort to give the native grasses a chance to emerge.

Their work continued for the better part of a decade. Slowly, the land began to transform itself. Some of the native grasses and forbs began to come back. However, what they noticed was that it wasn’t necessarily the key native grasses that returned. They were missing things like little bluestem and some of the grama grasses, for example. When they went in search of those grasses native to their specific region, they mostly came up short.

Ellen’s focus on regional native plants was not new. In the 1990’s she began her involvement with what was then the National Wildflower Research Center which Lady Bird Johnson started along with Helen Hayes. Ellen served as president of the organization in 1995-98. During her tenure, the name was

changed to the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in honor of the former first lady. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is now part of the College of Natural Sciences at University of Texas at Austin. Their scientists collaborate with CKWRI.

Ellen’s work at the wildflower center was amplified when the Temples began to tackle restoration on their ranch. It was quickly recognized that there was a tremendous need in South Texas for seed on a landscape scale. The Temples took their problem to the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. Through those early conversations, the formation of South Texas Natives came to be.

Ellen served on the founding committee and she worked closely with Fred Bryant, CKWRI’s then Director, and Paula Maywald, STN’s first Director, to get the program up and running. The Temple Ranch also served as a laboratory for some of the early experimental plantings.

Ellen credits CKWRI with recognizing first and foremost the connection between the health of the animals and the insects and the health of the habitat. “Walk into a field of KR bluestem. There are no bugs. Try to catch a grasshopper in that monoculture,” says Ellen. “The bugs evolved with the native plants.”

It took time and indeed lots of patience, but by 2012 when six miles of pipeline come through Temple Ranch, they were able to restore the entire right-of-way to a mix of South Texas Natives. It became affectionately known as “Ellen’s Pipeline Prairie.”





Photo by Joe Lowery

Today, there are 35-some different species of grasses and forbs that make up the South Texas Natives mix. “It was a 25 year effort,” says Ellen. “We were very proud to have a part in that.” She calls CKWRI’s efforts “groundbreaking” and “game changing” in that it made native prairie restoration possible on a large scale. “The Institute has an incredible group of people doing cutting edge work.”

Today there are thousands of acres of pipeline prairies scattered across South Texas. But it’s not just pipeline prairies. After lots of hard work and communicating the need for a shift in thinking, in planning for the future of Texas highways, the Texas Department of Transportation got on board with STN. Ellen credits her state senator, Robert Nichols, the former chairman of TxDOT, for getting the agency to shift their seeding mix recommendation to Texas natives.

The Temples also recognized the same challenges in East Texas. There simply wasn’t the native seed for highway projects, and pipeline projects, nor was there seed for restoring the forest floors.

After Buddy died in 2015, Ellen felt that one of the best ways to honor him was to bring the native seed project to East Texas. In 2022, East Texas Natives will

release its first three seeds to growers. “We’re on our way,” says Ellen. “It took a five year commitment, and I was very proud to do that in Buddy’s memory.”

In fact, today, the South Texas Natives model has been replicated not just in East Texas but also West Texas, Central Texas, the Panhandle and most recently in the Coastal Plains. All are now under the umbrella of Texas Native Seeds. “If we can do it here in Texas, we can do it anywhere,” says Ellen. “I think it’s needed, and I think there is talk about that for sure.”

No doubt, Texas Native Seeds will continue to evolve and Ellen predicts there may be opportunities to come to really highlight the importance of native grasses in the carbon credit discussions.

“I think what may be missing in the discussion is the fact that a mature prairie is as much of a carbon sink as a forest,” says Ellen. “Perhaps one of CKWRI’s contributions going forward will be to help the ranching community capitalize on the value of their land through more prairie restoration. I definitely see restoration as the work of the 21st century because we’ve lost quite a bit of our natural world.”

Ellen has also long had interests in women’s history and education. In particular, she understands the need to connect young people to nature. She educates her own grandchildren introducing them to the names of the plants – the yucca and the prickly pear and in East Texas the three different kinds of pine trees with their different sizes of pine cones.

“Even if kids grow up on concrete, if they have places to go where they can connect to nature. Research shows there is a benefit especially if we can capture their interest early in life,” she notes. When we establish parks within walking distance of homes in cities, when we take care of the creeks that flow through our cities and make them accessible, kids benefit.” She also predicts that going forward, there will need to be an even greater appreciation of the connection between the health of the land and the health of the state’s rivers.

“Our water is going to be our main challenge in the future,” says Ellen. “Without the deep roots of the prairie plants, without the forest, without the trees, without the special care of the land, the rivers, the creeks and the springs dry up. They need those deep roots to filter the water and to keep the rivers flowing and the aquifers healthy.”

In addition to the establishment of the “Buddy and Ellen Temple Native Plant Endowment” at CKWRI, she and Buddy also long-supported the Conservation Fund helping them preserve the Neches River. The Neches was of particular interest because some of Buddy’s family land was on the Neches. As a child, he came to know every inch of a special area known as Boggy Slough. One of his final acts was to acquire that land back for the Temple Foundation to establish the Boggy Slough Conservation Area.

Though Ellen has been knocked down a few times, her faith is deep like the roots of her prairie grasses. “My faith and the land connect me to God. I realize that more and more.” She also draws strength from

her late husband. “Even though Buddy was very sick, he was out there on the land every day having the time of his life,” says Ellen.

Ellen’s steadfast support of CKWRI’s efforts continues. In particular she continues to plant the seeds – figuratively and literally - about the importance of Texas Native Seeds. She vows that everyone can make a difference in their own backyard. She’s been tending to her own little pocket prairie at her home in Lufkin for 15 years now. She acknowledges that restoration projects require one to have persistence, lots of patience and some faith.

“You can’t give up after five years. Sometimes it takes 20 or 30 years.” And when the task seems daunting even a bit overwhelming, she encourages friends to do just a little bit at a time.

“Don’t take on 72 acres; take on a half an acre,” says Ellen. “Start small. Plant a possum holly for the birds; pick out some native plants that you like and feed the birds and feed the bugs.” 🌿

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# The Edward Randall, III Decoy Collection

by Caroline McAllister

In November 2020, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI) lost a good friend, but the memory of Edward Randall, III lives on through his meaningful gift of his decoy collection. When Ed died, he instructed that his lifelong collection of wooden decoys be donated to CKWRI for all to enjoy. This generous gift will forever be a reminder of not only his loyal support of the Institute, but also his dedication to sharing his passion of the outdoors with others.

Ed was an avid outdoorsman and hunter with a special passion for duck and quail hunting. His appreciation for the sport led him to collect the hand-carved waterfowl decoys, each one a treasure and representative of a happy memory in his life. Ed

began collecting hand-carved decoys as a young man. Over the years, his collection grew to over 250 decoys.

Ed grew up in Galveston, Texas and went on to attend The Hill School in Pennsylvania. He was the President of the Class of 1944, Captain of the football and baseball teams and earned seven varsity letters in three sports. After high school, he served in the United States Marine Corps, and went on to attend Officer Candidate School at Princeton University. Ed graduated from The University of Texas, moved to Houston and went on to have an impressive career in investment banking that included serving as a director of the New York Stock Exchange and Chief Executive Officer of Rotan, Mosle and Moreland for 17 years.



Ed served on the boards of numerous public companies, was active in his community and served many schools, hospitals, churches and social clubs. Throughout his life he remained dedicated to hunting and fishing and played tennis throughout the state. Ed's friends all describe him as a gifted storyteller, and anyone who was fortunate enough to know him can reflect on wonderful memories enhanced through his talent. It's the story telling aspect of the decoy collection that makes each one so special. Each decoy, made by hand, has a unique story, and The Institute is beyond grateful for this generous gift and the opportunity to tell the story of this unique collection. We encourage you to come by and see this collection in its permanent home at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Center in Kingsville.

## [ HISTORY OF WOODEN DECOYS ]

The early colonists to North America were greeted annually by waves of migrating waterfowl, which provided an opportunity for subsistence hunting. The native people they met used "decoys" to lure waterfowl, which were generally fashioned from reeds or the stuffed skins of dead birds. Using their ingenuity and woodworking skills, the colonists realized that wooden lures would last longer.

As early as the first decade of the 19th century, rigs of wooden decoys were used throughout the eastern seaboard. While birds were initially killed for table fare, early entrepreneurs realized the demand for food in urban markets provided an excellent opportunity, and large numbers of "market hunters" harvested countless ducks, geese and shorebirds to feed that



demand. Large rigs of wooden decoys became vital tools to assist in that effort.

Once the railroads connected more and more markets to the outlying hunting grounds, cottage industries of decoy makers blossomed throughout the county, producing vast numbers of wooden decoys. In the decades after the Civil War, with more leisure time on their hands, wealthy patrons would take



these same trains to the hunting grounds for a few days of sport. Many market hunters took advantage of the opportunity to provide guiding services as supplemental income.

Eventually, as waterfowl populations were depleted in the early 20th century, conservationists like Caesar Kleberg and his cousin, U.S. Congressman Richard M. Kleberg, became concerned for the future of these migratory birds. Congressman Kleberg filed a bill in 1934 and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, better known as the Duck Stamp Act, which provided funds to conserve and restore migratory waterfowl and the wetlands vital to their survival. This program has been called one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated. Other laws were passed that outlawed market hunting, implemented bag limits and established seasons to restrict the number of ducks that could be harvested in a single year.

Nearly 100 years ago, enthusiasts began collecting the old wooden artifacts of the golden age of waterfowl hunting, memorializing the days afield and in the blind. Thankfully, that interest preserved one of the great American folk arts. The collections cemented the legacy left behind by the countless decoy makers who provided those essential tools, enabling future generations to appreciate the maker's artistry and the hunter's way of life.

Although wooden decoys are no longer used in the great numbers of bygone days, many contemporary carvers have continued the tradition, taking the craft to ever higher levels of artisanship. They are truly an American treasure. ♣

*Please visit the complete decoy collection at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Center where they are displayed in their permanent display cases.*

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# ALUMNI

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## Spotlight

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**Janel  
ORTIZ**

CKWRI Class of 2018,  
Assistant Professor,  
California State Polytechnic  
University-Pomona,  
Pomona, CA

### *What is your background with the Institute?*

From 2014 to 2018, I was working on my dissertation under Dr. April Conkey. My project was two-fold in that I conducted field work for a long-term bird monitoring program on East Foundation lands and I also worked in local K-12 schools surrounding Kingsville as well as in Corpus Christi. As part of the field work on East Foundation lands, I conducted bird surveys throughout the year on the San Antonio Viejo, El Sauz, and Santa Rosa ranches. For my education work, I created curriculum integrating techniques and research on birds for students to learn about at the K-12 level. I also held professional development workshops for teachers and visited students in the classroom.

### *What are you doing now?*

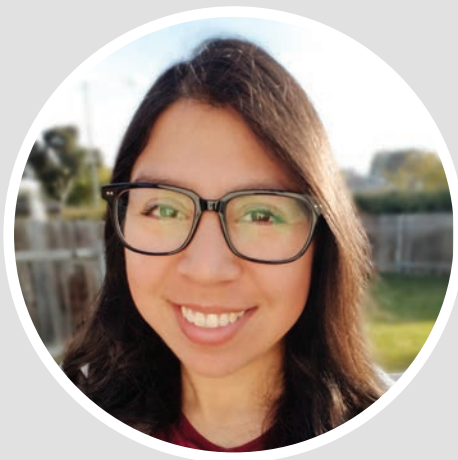
I'm currently in my second year as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in a joint position with the Center for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (CEMaST) and the Department of Biological Sciences at California State Polytechnic University-Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona). CEMaST has maintained my passion for working with K-12 students and teachers and is largely in charge of preparing pre-service teachers, holding professional development for in-service teachers, and partnering with local K-12 schools. In the Biological Sciences Department, I teach majors and non-majors courses including Life Science, Advanced Biology Teaching Methods, and Environment and Society. I also have my lab up and going with two Master's students and a large group of undergraduates focusing on research in urban wildlife and conservation education.



*Janel Ortiz, during her years at CKWRI, conducting a bird survey on an East Foundation ranch.*

### *How does your time at CKWRI continue to affect you today?*

My time at CKWRI allowed me to expand my skills and meet so many new people. I took every opportunity I could to volunteer with other projects so I could get a diverse set of experiences beyond my own project that I am now able to share with my students. I learned so much and it was definitely an experience so unique that it will be unmatched. I met so many new people at CKWRI as well as through my project, which required me to travel throughout South Texas. I cherish those memories and I am so thankful that I had such a fun, exciting time! I value the friendships that developed and grew during my time at CKWRI. I am fortunate that I still maintain many of those connections today and look forward to meeting up at future TWS conferences!



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*Photo by Brian Loflin*