

Ecological Restoration Brief

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Geography Student Internships at The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary, Hardin County, Silsbee, Texas

By: William Forbes
Associate Professor of Geography,
Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX



Geography students conduct freshwater mussel survey.
Photo credit: William Forbes

Geography students have served as interns from 2009 to 2014 at The Nature Conservancy's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary, located in the southern part of East Texas. Interns have primarily worked on longleaf pine habitat restoration through prescribed burning, manual brush removal, and spot herbicide application. Preliminary results indicate all three treatments may work best to restore rare/endangered species such as orchids or Texas trailing phlox. Other tasks include surveys of indicator species such as bobwhite quail and freshwater mussels, mapping of management units, trail maintenance, and long-term forest ecological monitoring.

The internships have benefited both students and the Sanctuary through accomplishment of work tasks and gaining of hands-on experience with natural resource management. Four of the six interns were employed in natural resource positions after their internships (two currently full-time with The Nature Conservancy), while two are in the process of graduating. Students had taken a class in biogeography prior to their internship, while several also took a class in local flora to prepare. Students will next help with long-term monitoring to continue the relationship between the Stephen F. Austin State University geography program and The Nature Conservancy.



Texas Trailing Phlox
Photo credit: Texas A&M University, Kingsville

The Society for Ecological Restoration, Texas Chapter promotes ecological restoration as a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and re-establishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.

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