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Society for Ecological Restoration
Texas Chapter

SER TEXAS SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Restoration Update *May, 2014*

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TXSER Newsflash

Happy 50th Birthday - Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

This year, Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge (FWNC&R) is celebrating its 50 year anniversary. From the humble beginnings as a nature preserve started by local Audubon Society members, to our vast land management and outreach education programs, FWNC&R has grown to a nationally-recognized municipally-owned refuge.

Carter Smith, Executive Director of TPWD *Fort Worth WILD* gala, April 26, 2014 Photo credit: Suzanne Tuttle

In celebration of 50 years of stewardship, the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge have hosted several large events including the recent *Fort Worth WILD* gala in April. Carter Smith, Executive Director of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department delivered a very inspirational keynote address. Other 50th anniversary events include the Buffalo Boogie 5K fun run/walk, the proceeds of which benefit the refuge's bison herd; and a November juried gallery art exhibition and sale, the proceeds of which will help restore the historic Civilian Conservation Corps structures on site. In October, the

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Employment Opportunities & More

For up-to-date announcements of positions open in ecological restoration and environmental science, visit our website at: Job Postings

We also post a wide range of articles on ecological restoration issues as well as job and volunteer opportunities on our Facebook page at: TXSER Facebook Page

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We are heading west for 2014!

19th Annual TXSER Conference co-hosted with SER/SW is scheduled for

refuge will celebrate the 45 year anniversary of the sighting of our very own monster. Lake Worth Monster Bash will be a family-friendly festival highlighting the light-hearted lore of a hairy beast once thought to have roamed the area. Or still does...

For more information on 50th birthday celebrations visit: FWNC&R

2014 Conference Update

October 17-19, Alpine Texas

We have confirmed two plenary speakers for the Saturday morning, October 18th, plenary session.

Louis Harveson is a Professor of Wildlife Management at Sul Ross State University and Director of the Borderlands Research Institute in Alpine. Harveson brings expertise in large mammal and upland gamebird ecology, conservation, and management. He will also share his experience with public/private partnerships that facilitate restoration projects.

Carianne Campbell is the Landscape Restoration Program Manager at the Sky Island Alliance in Tucson. Campbell specializes in Sonoran Desert vegetation ecology methodologies and in designing, implementing, and monitoring restoration projects. Campbell has extensive experience surveying and documenting plant species and communities through the southwest and specifically within the Sky Island region.

We are pleased to have Harveson and Campbell join us in October.

The conference is taking shape and information is being continually updated. Click here for updates: 2014 Conference Details.

Member Spotlight

Name: Sonia Najera

City: Corpus Christi

Affiliation: Grasslands Program Manager, The Nature Conservancy

Sonia Najera with son
Clymer Meadow Preserve, Hunt County
Photo credit: David Newstead

Briefly describe your ongoing efforts/ interest in ecological restoration: I am part of a team of dedicated biologists working towards grassland and riparian habitat restoration, enhancement, and outreach in the Coastal

October 17-19, 2014 in Alpine, Texas

Click Here for Details

Prairie, Blackland Prairie, and Edwards Plateau. Our work is a mix of strategies from managing our own preserves for connectivity and demonstration sites (what worked and what hasn't worked) to assisting private landowners with their management needs through Rx fire, providing native seed for restoration, or developing a rotational grazing plan. A new and exciting challenge is thinking through the steps on how to restore former rice fields to native coastal wet prairie.

Describe your favorite outdoor activity: Catching lizards with my 4-year old son.

What is your favorite plant and/or animal?

Favorite Plant: Spring Lady Tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*)

Favorite Animal: Long-Billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)

Spring Ladies-Tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*)
Photo credit: Google Photos

Coordinator's Corner

Assisted Migration: Is it Time to Focus the Lens?

With the release of the March IPCC 2014 Climate Change report followed by the White House report stating "climate change is here and action is needed now," the complex issues of climate change are in the national spotlight. How do we, as professionals interested and involved in ecological restoration in Texas, or elsewhere, respond? For the last decade or so, the debate about assisted migration has been conducted with restorationists falling on all sides of the equation. Is it time to revisit the issue of assisted migration, assess the risks and opportunities, and move toward a more coherent scientific and policy stance on this issue?

Assisted migration, used interchangeably with managed relocation, assisted range expansion, and assisted colonization, all of which undoubtedly have slightly nuanced differences in definition, is considered a means of human-aided movement of species beyond their historical range. The goal of assisted migration is: (a) conserving the species and (b) facilitating species adaptation to predicted climate change. In many ways this is not new. We have been relocating species for years - wolves reintroduced into Yellowstone - however, historically relocated species were moved into regions in which they were once known to have inhabited. We are however, without the historical data when we begin to think about relocating species to a new area where they have never lived. We can argue, that "this is what we know about the species and where it lives now and this is what climate change models tell us about the future." There are, however, many more scientific, socio/political, and ethical issues involved. What we are certain of, and many respected scientists have reported, is that many species worldwide could face extinction as a result of climate change over the next 50+ years.

So, where do we, as ecological restoration scientists and practitioners, currently stand on this? We know that the benefits and risks to this practice abound for ecosystems, species, and for society. Those involved in the debate tend to fall into three camps: active

assisted migration, modified assisted migration, and let nature take its course with no assistance.

Active Assisted Migration: Those supporting active assisted migration trust in model projections of climate change and suitable habitat, and are confident that these projections are the main driver behind species distribution. They believe that extensive relocation of species outside of current ranges is critical to minimizing species loss. They understand that relocation of species may disrupt existing communities at the relocation point and acknowledge that consequences may be irreversible; however, maintaining species outweighs the risks involved and they feel we must act now in order to minimize species loss.

Modified Assisted Migration: Those who fall into the modified category are confident that assisted migration is necessary; however, they carefully consider the balance between the associated benefits and risks. The decision to relocate a species must be supported by science and may require proof of imminent threat, a full risk assessment, and a management plan. They encourage conservation and landscape connectivity in conjunction with rigorous scientific research, relying less on climate model predictions. Despite being more cautious, results can go either way - actions may still lead to a disruption of ecosystems at the relocation point, but the species survives, or the current lack of data may result in inaction and a subsequent loss of species.

No Assistance: Those who choose to let nature take its course and prefer no action, are confident that species have persisted despite previous climatic shifts. They are concerned about our inadequate understanding of ecological controls of species distribution and the unintended consequences of human interference especially the potential for the relocated species to become invasive. Folks who fall into this category prefer to preserve isolated populations and increase landscape connectivity to facilitate dispersal. Inaction however, will increase the threat of extinction for certain species and extinction is irreversible.

Many questions arise. Do we act now or do we wait and see? Do we conserve spaces or species? What should we preserve and at what cost? Should we preserve the status quo in ecological communities or should we let nature take its course? Does it have to be all or nothing? Can we move forward on a small scale? Perhaps now is the time to focus our lens and develop processes that identify the risks and opportunities of the alternative approaches, which may, in turn, suggest best management practices given a particular set of circumstances.

What are your thoughts on this issue? What do you, as Texan restorationists, think? Send me an e-mail at: gmthomas_eco@fastmail.fm and let me know your thoughts. I will include your comments in an upcoming newsletter.

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.

Become a member today! **Click Here to Join Us!**

Join the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration. Chapter members receive valuable benefits including:

the opportunity to network with restoration practitioners and enthusiasts;

discounts to our Annual Conference, an opportunity to share and learn;
invitations to attend volunteer workdays around the state; and,
monthly updates and quarterly newsletters with articles and notices about regional events that allow you to connect to the local restoration community.

Chapter membership fees of $15 support chapter administration. The TXSER Board of Directors consists of volunteers who share a passion for furthering ecological restoration in Texas.

Joining SER links you with a global restoration network. SER member benefits include:

SERNews quarterly newsletter;
discounts on journal publications;
discounts to SER World Conferences;
discounts on SER Career Center;
access to Restoration Project Showcase;
access to a searchable, online member directory, and,
promotional opportunities through the SER Calendar of Events and Restoration Project Showcase.

To become a member visit: **www.ser.org/membership**

Be sure to click the Texas Chapter as your Chapter Affiliate. We look forward to having you join us!

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