

Society for Ecological Restoration

Texas Chapter



Restoration Update

February, 2015

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TXSER Newsflash

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Excellence in Restoration Award: Each year at our conference, TXSER honors someone who has made substantial contributions to restoration ecology in Texas with the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award. These contributions can include ground-breaking research, amazing on-the-ground restoration implementation, or outstanding facilitation of others' restoration efforts. If you know of someone who should be considered for this award, please send a short paragraph about their efforts and qualifications to Charlotte Reemts or Gwen Thomas.

Award Selection Committee: We are putting together a committee to consider this year's nominees for the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award. The time commitment for this committee will be relatively small: a couple of hours reading through the nominations and a couple of conference calls to vote on the recipient. If you're interested in reading about some of the most exciting restoration work in Texas, please contact Charlotte Reemts or Gwen Thomas.

Field Day/Workshop Task Force: We love our TXSER conferences, but they only happen once a year. We are exploring other events that we can hold in between conferences. These events could include field visits or volunteer days at a restoration site or formal workshops that provide training in restoration techniques. We are putting together a task force to explore our options. If you're interested in helping with the task force, or if you have ideas for an event that TXSER should organize, please contact Charlotte Reemts or Gwen Thomas.

Charlotte Reemts - creemts@tnc.org

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Michelle Villafranca

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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:
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We also post a wide range of
articles on ecological
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SAVE THE DATE!!

Celebrate TXSER's

TXSER A&M Student Association News Upcoming Events

The Texas A&M Society for Ecological Restoration Student Association (TAMU SER) welcomes two very exciting guest speakers this semester. Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month at 6 pm in HFSB 105. The public is welcome to attend.

On March 3, Dr. Michael L. Morrison will discuss "Wildlife: The Often Forgotten Fundamental Component of Restoration Planning." Dr. Morrison is professor and Caesar Kleberg Chair in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Department at Texas A&M. He is an early proponent of ecological restoration and has been working extensively on advancing incorporation of desired future conditions for wildlife in restoration planning. He is also involved in several studies seeking to conserve endangered species, including birds, small mammals, and herpetofauna. His current research focuses on the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo in Texas and the Sierra Nevada willow flycatcher in California. In addition to a very impressive academic record, Dr. Morrison is skilled in professional packing, horse shoeing, wrangling/roping, cooking, and natural history instruction.

On April 7, David Mahler of Ecological Survey Consulting, a private ecological restoration company in Austin, Texas, will be speaking about his long-term restoration and research project at a private ranch in Spicewood, Texas in a presentation titled "Spicewood Ranch After 23 Years of Restoration: What We Have Accomplished and Learned." Restoration practices on the 1200 acre Spicewood Ranch included controlled burns, cedar removal, deer reduction, high fencing, seeding, exotic species control, and deer exclosures for research. Mr. Mahler has a long-standing connection with the Society for Ecological Restoration and was the first Executive Director of Wild Basin Preserve in Austin, Texas.

Paddlefish Restoration in the Caddo Lake Watershed

By: Richard Lowerre, President, Caddo Lake Institute

The nonprofit organization Caddo Lake Institute (CLI) (www.caddolake.us) has been working for the last 10 years to restore healthy flows to Caddo Lake and its extensive wetlands and larger watershed. The project has developed recommended flow regimes for Caddo Lake and its three major contributing rivers, along with a process to apply the science to other streams in the watershed.

In 2011, a five- year
agreement was reached
by CLI with the Corps of
Engineers and the

20th Anniversary

at our

2015 Annual Conference**Scheduled for:
November 13-15, 2015****On the campus of:
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in
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Northeast Texas Municipal Water District (NETMWD) to implement, to the extent feasible, the environmental flow regimes for Big Cypress Bayou, with releases of water from Lake O' the Pines to allow CLI to begin to test the validity of these flow recommendations.

While full proof of the value of the new flow regime will require long-term monitoring, there are some short-term tests of benefits that CLI is pursuing, to convince the Corps and NETMWD either to make the release agreement permanent or extend it to allow additional work.

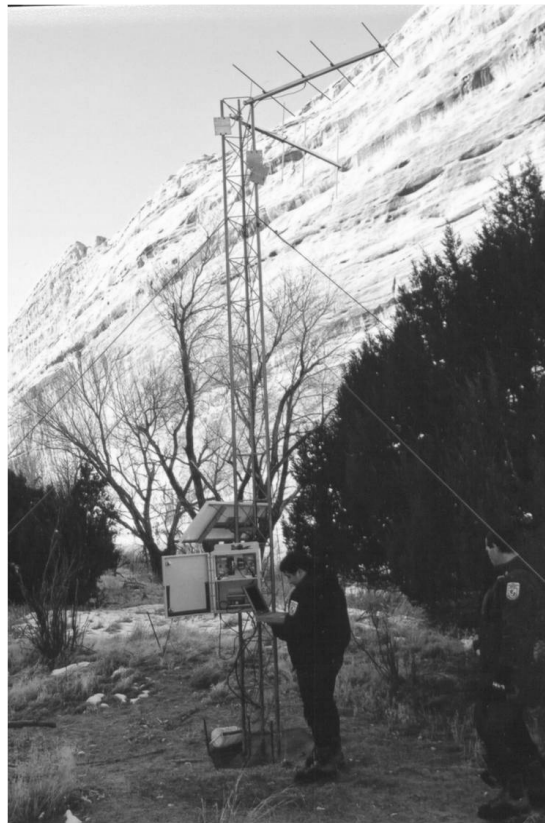


**Lynn Wright of TPWD introducing a paddlefish to its new home.
Photo credit: TPWD**

One of those tests began in early 2014. CLI is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Texas Parks & Wildlife, the Nature Conservancy, and others to experiment with the reintroduction of paddlefish, a fish species that had not been seen in the watershed for almost 50 years. USFWS surgically implanted radio transmitters in 47 two-foot long paddlefish, constructed stationary towers, and released the fish into the watershed to determine if changes in the flow regimes and habitat in the watershed would support a large scale reintroduction of the fish. Data collected from monitoring, capture, and re-release of six of the fish in the fall of 2014 shows that those released in March 2014 are healthy and have shown significant growth. None have gone over the low spillway at Caddo Lake's outlet.

With this initial success, CLI and USFWS released an additional 2000 fish. These fish are smaller than those released in March and do not have transmitters. They are tagged so they can be identified as part of this release in the future. Monitoring of the original 47 fish will continue until the radio transmitters in the fish stop working in the spring of 2015 and CLI and its partners can determine the next steps.

To date, the new flow regimes and other changes



Telemetry Tower
Photo Credit: USFWS

in the watershed appear to provide suitable conditions for the survival of the paddlefish. If this initial success continues, the test will help prove that the new flow regimes should also benefit other fish and aquatic species in the Caddo Lake watershed. That proof, along with success of additional tests on restorations of wetland done through timed pulsed releases from Lake O' the Pines, should justify a permanent change in the operations of the Lake and possibly reallocation of some storage space in the Lake for downstream flows.

Member Spotlight

Name: Georganna Collins

City: Houston, TX

Affiliation: Restoration Specialist, Ecology and Environment, Inc.

Briefly describe your ongoing efforts/interest in ecological restoration.

For 30 years now, I have been actively involved with various types of ecological restoration that has focused on creating habitat for animals. As a Landscape Architect and certified wetland delineator with bachelor's degree in mining engineering and a master's degree focus on the rehabilitation of disturbed land, my work has focused on wetland habitat protection, creation, and rehabilitation. I have been involved with numerous river and stream restoration projects that encompass various wetland types from inland riverine freshwater fens and bogs, bald cypress swamps to estuarine intertidal salt marshes. I provide site assessments and planning to minimize environmental impacts, control erosion through bioengineering, beneficially use dredged material, and integrate natural landscape features for river and stream restoration from conceptual master planning through to construction oversight and post-construction



Georganna rescuing a turtle during a stream restoration project

monitoring associated with both large and small scale projects. As a project designer/manager, I prepare restoration plans, permit applications, construction drawings, and technical specifications; provide permitting assistance; deliver public presentations and work with stakeholders; provide site monitoring and site management oversight to ensure project goals and permit compliance; and address performance criteria for numerous restoration projects to ensure success.



Georganna making her way to give a
"big ole gal a big hug."

Two favorite restoration projects I have worked on include a project with the World Wildlife Fund and the Wetlands Initiative where I created a restoration plan to return agricultural land to restored wetland complexes at the confluence of the Illinois and Spoon Rivers. This land has become the Emiquion National Park operated by The Nature Conservancy as a proof of concept project where, if enough wetlands and floodplains are restored along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, water quality improvements can be made in the Gulf of Mexico. Another project was to provide the biological technical support to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District, Port of Houston Authority, and the Beneficial Uses Group for creating over 2,000 acres of salt marsh, 118 acres of oyster reef, and a 6-acre bird island in Galveston Bay. A highlight was working with the Houston Audubon Society on planting this bird island which has become one of the most productive nesting sites in Galveston Bay region.

Describe your favorite outdoor activity. My favorite activity is communing with nature and soaking up the sun.

What is your favorite Texas plant and/or animal? I am very partial to any old majestic tree regardless of whether it is on the State or National Registry of Champion Trees. The bigger the better for me, so I can be found outside looking for them and when I encounter one, regardless of who is with me or what I was doing, I get out and give the tree a big hug.

**A Heartfelt Thanks to the Following Organizations for their
Generous Support of our 2014 Conference!!**



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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 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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