

Society for Ecological Restoration

Texas Chapter



Restoration Update

April, 2015

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TXSER Photos: Do you have photos from the early TXSER days - 1995 to present? To celebrate our 20th anniversary, we are putting together a slide show of TXSER activities over the past 2 decades. We are searching for photos of TXSER Members, Board of Directors, conferences, field trips, workshops, site visits, picnics... Please send any photos you can dig up to Kate Crosthwaite at: Katherine.Crosthwaite@hdrinc.com.

Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award: Each year at our conference, TXSER honor someone who has made substantial contributions to restoration ecology in Texas with our 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 by Friday, May 15th at: creemts@tnc.org.

Conference Update

November 13-15, 2015 - Trinity University, San Antonio

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Mitchell Greer, Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences at Fort Hays State University in Kansas has agreed to be our Saturday morning Plenary Speaker at our 2015 Annual Conference in San Antonio. Greer teaches courses on Grassland Ecology, Plant Taxonomy, and Rangeland Management. His research has involved the study of invasive grasses and their effects on the flora and fauna of native species. He is currently working on a project with Northern Arizona University's NSF-funded genomics laboratory to sequence the bacteria, fungi, and mycorrhiza of Old World Bluestems to compare with that of native grasses.

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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](#)

SAVE THE DATE!!

TXSER 2015 Annual Conference:

Celebrating 20 Years of Ecological Restoration in Texas

November 13-15, 2015

Many of his OWB samples were taken from Wild Mercury Preserve near Kendalia, TX.

Greer looks at grassland restoration processes in a different way than most -- from the ground up. He will share with us his understanding of the relationship between soil biotic communities and plant emitted chemicals and their impact on native grasses. We are thrilled that he will be joining us in November!

Member Spotlight

Name: Megan Helton

City: Austin, TX

Affiliation: Field Coordinator, Texas Conservation Corps.

Briefly describe your ongoing efforts/ interest in ecological restoration.

I manage crews of young adults who complete conservation and disaster response service projects throughout Texas. We work on public lands with partners such as Texas Parks and Wildlife and the National Park Service to meet their maintenance and ecological restoration needs. Our members

typically serve a year with Texas Conservation Corps and during that time they are exposed to various restoration experts and career paths as well as hands-on field based projects that give them a great jumping off point for a future in the conservation job market. So my work is twofold - to train and mentor future conservation leaders and to restore and maintain our public lands.

Describe your favorite outdoor activity. That depends on the week! Sometimes it's biking, running, climbing...but it is always sitting in a quiet spot on a sunny day with a book and my dog and a bit of water.

What is your favorite Texas plant and/or animal? The red fox. There are a couple that live in the cemetery near my house and every time I see them I'm reminded that landscapes are very much shared places that 'wild' is adaptable.



Megan Helton and Best Friend

Trinity University
Center for the Sciences
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Red Fox Kits (*Vulpes vulpes*)
Photo credit: Michael L. Baird, Wikipedia

Coordinator's Corner - Linking Texas and Cuba: Protecting Nature's Migrants

By: Gwen Michele Thomas, TXSER Chapter Coordinator

In March, I boarded a plane with 19 university students on a 10 day educational study trip to Cuba. As we made the 45 minute flight between Miami and Havana, below us many non-human species were riding ocean and air currents northwards to arrive at their destination in the United States. For me and my traveling companions, getting on the plane with visa in hand was an easy crossing. For those traveling below us, this crossing is far more complicated.

As the largest island in the Caribbean, Cuba, located at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, is the breeding and stop-over grounds for many migratory species that end up in Texas and other parts of the United States. Its relative isolation over the past 50 years has enabled its coastal and terrestrial ecosystems to remain comparatively well preserved, allowing for the protection of endemic species as well as for those who spend time in both Cuba and the United States.

Large populations of migratory birds reside in both countries including: vireos, woodpeckers, warblers, herons and an assortment of raptors such as Sharp-shinned and Swainson's hawks. Additionally, Cuba's coastal underwater shelves, coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves provide habitat and breeding grounds for marine species such as the green and hawksbill sea turtles, sharks, manatees, and fish species including snapper, grouper and Atlantic bluefin tuna. The Cuban coastal waters are also the breeding grounds for microbes and tiny larvae, offspring of fish and lobster, which

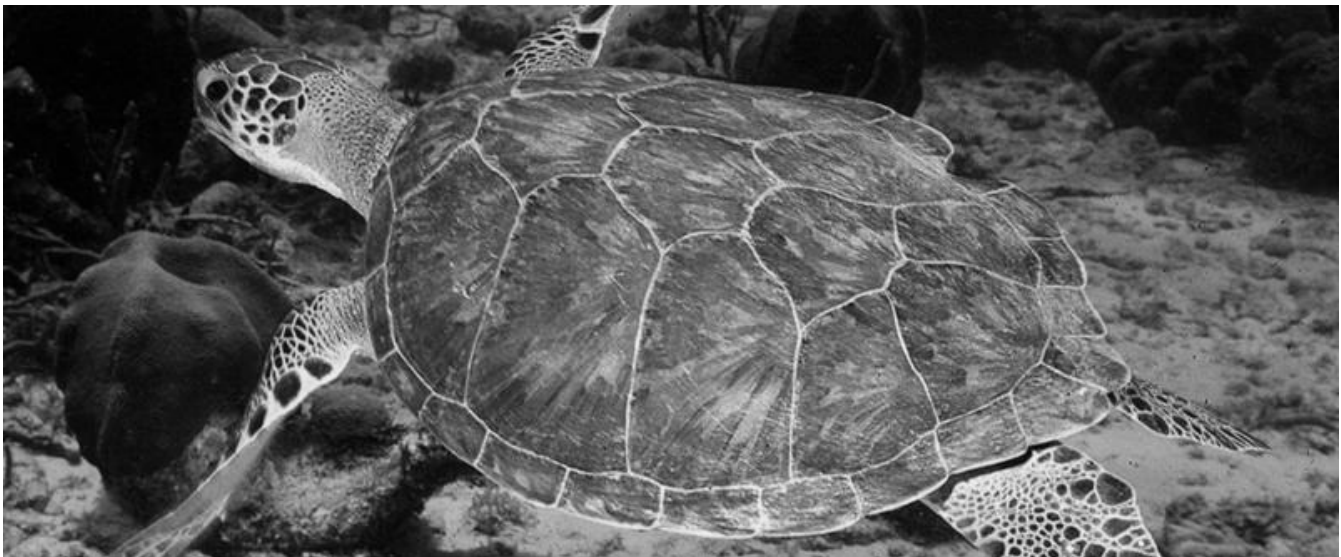
float on the currents and on which our Gulf Coast fisheries depend. Thus, we are inextricably linked to our neighbors across the Gulf by the many aquatic and avian species that ply the air and sea currents of the Gulf of Mexico between Cuba and the United States with no regard for international boundaries.

From the Gulf Coast fisheries and coastal tourism to pollinating plants, seed dispersal, consuming insects, and feeding our spirits, the quality of our lives, both here and in Cuba, depend on the health of these ecosystems, the species they support, and their ability to migrate between our two countries. Protecting and restoring their habitat is critical to the livelihood of these species. Many obstacles that threaten habitat and safe passage such as agricultural run-off, coastal and inland development, and oil drilling, to name a few, abound within both countries. The ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with our counterparts across the Gulf to ensure adequate monitoring and regulation of potential and real threats to these migratory species is paramount.



Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)
Photo credit: Wikipedia

With the thaw in US-Cuban relations, we, as American scientists, environmentalists, and citizens, particularly those of us with a stake in the Gulf Coast region, must find ways to develop linkages with our counterparts in Cuba to protect the future of the systems on which we depend. We need new, collaborative ways to study, assess, and monitor changes in habitats. We need to support our Cuban counterparts in accessing up to date information and resources and in developing a voice where their concerns can be heard nationally and internationally. Some of this has started, despite being hampered by long-standing the embargo and political differences. It would, however, behoove those of us with direct access to the Gulf of Mexico to reach out and to start developing mechanisms for greater international cooperation to ensure that all these species can safely cross international boundaries. Their lives depend on it, as do ours.



Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). Photo credit: Andy Bruckner, NOAA

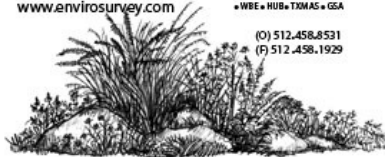
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Join the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration. Chapter members receive valuable benefits including:

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;
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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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