

Society for Ecological Restoration

Texas Chapter



Restoration Update

November, 2015

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More About SER

TXSER celebrated its 20th anniversary in style. The anniversary conference was held Friday - Sunday, November 13-15th, at Trinity University in San Antonio in their beautiful, new, Center for the Sciences and Innovation. Over 100 participants from academic institutions, private and non-profit organizations and federal, state and municipal government agencies joined TXSER's Board of Directors over the weekend for field trips, presentations and lots of networking among kindred spirits involved in restoration efforts across the State of Texas and beyond.

Conference photos are posted on the [TXSER facebook page](#) and all presentations will soon up uploaded on the [TXSER website](#) under the "meetings" tab.

2015 Conference Highlights

TXSER Board of Directors

President
Charlotte Reemts

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North Texas Rep.

Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award

This is TXSER's third year of presenting the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award. The award is given to an individual who has shown exemplary dedication to the conservation, management and restoration of the Texas natural resource base. It is presented to a person(s) who has made significant and lasting contributions to the field.

We had many outstanding nominees, proving, once again, that there are many folks in Texas doing excellent work restoring the ecological balance of our State. While the competition was stiff, the 2015 Excellence in Ecological Restoration Award went to the City of San Antonio Natural Areas team consisting of **Gail Gallegos, Jayne Neal and Wendy Leonard.**

The Natural Areas program operates under the City of San Antonio

Michelle Villafranca

East Texas Rep.
William Forbes

South Texas Rep.
Eric Grahmann

West Texas Rep.
Katherine Crosthwaite

Central Texas Rep.
Ingrid Karklins

Coastal Texas Rep.
Alejandro Fierro Cabo

Coastal Texas Rep.
Bradley Hoge

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Gwen Thomas

TXSER
info@txser.org
(469) 321-4883

Parks and Recreation Department. It is designed to protect the Edwards Aquifer recharge areas as well as to conserve and restore plant and wildlife populations and provide for public recreation and education. The team has worked long and hard to maintain, restore and improve San Antonio's natural areas, coordinating a dedicated staff and thousands of volunteers to restore the landscape and educate the public. We thank you for your hard work and dedication. Many, many congratulations!



(L-R) Kelly Lyons, TXSER Board VP;
San Antonio Natural Areas Team - Jayne Neal, Wendy Leonard, Gail Gallegos;
and Charlotte Reemts, TXSER Board Pres.

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](#)

Saturday Evening Keynote Address

Dr. Steven Whisenant, Professor Emeritus, Ecosystem Science and Management, Texas A&M University and Senior Scientist at the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture in College Station provided the conference keynote address.

Whisenant, author of "[Repairing Damaged Wildlands: A Process-Oriented Landscape Scale Approach](#)," a book that has likely served as a reference manual for just about everyone in the room, connected what we do locally here in Texas to the global arena. He provided examples of restoration work that he has been involved in from Texas to China, pulling in both the science and policy behind what we do. Whisenant was enthusiastic and optimistic about the direction that we are moving in and stressed that *what we do matters* and it is our job (note the collective "our") to continue protecting and restoring the planet we are living on.

TXSER is grateful for Whisenant's contributions to the field, his wisdom, and his guidance for all of us. Many thanks Steve.



**Steve Whisenant addressing the
TXSER 2015 Conference**

Additionally, in his talk, Whisenant referred to restoration work taking place on the Loess Plateau in China. Please see the linked YouTube Video by Dr. John D. Liu for more information on this effort - [Hope in a Changing Climate](#).

Stay tuned for TXSER's December Newsletter which will have many more conference highlights including the winners of the Student Graduate and Undergraduate Presentation Awards and our first-ever Plant ID Competition.

Member Spotlight

Name: Chris Gabler

City: Houston

Affiliation: Research Assistant Professor,
University of Houston, Department of Biology

and Biochemistry

Briefly describe your ongoing efforts/interest in ecological restoration.

My interests have always spanned both restoration and invasion ecology, so I have mainly focused my efforts on restoring habitats dominated by invasive species. Most often, this has meant restoring coastal prairies invaded by Chinese tallow trees, which was the topic of my doctoral dissertation at Rice University. For the capstone project of my dissertation, I performed 11 replicated experimental restorations of habitats invaded by tallow trees across a broad moisture gradient in eastern Texas (from seasonal wetlands to drier prairies). Results from this project show that (1) moisture regime determines which factors are most important to restoration success and invasion risk, and thus which factors can be used to predict restoration outcomes; (2) native seed addition does help suppress tallow trees, even though tallow is a superior competitor, especially where tallow is water stressed; (3) climate variability can allow tallow trees to become established in areas where conditions are typically unsuitable; and (4) some areas dominated by Chinese tallow trees are actually 'cryptic opportunities' for cheap and easy restoration (i.e., they require minimal ongoing management). Cryptic opportunities develop because tallow can become established in areas during rare windows of opportunity (short periods of favorable conditions), but can survive in those areas indefinitely, even though conditions are unsuitable for tallow recruitment most of the time. Cryptic opportunities represent the "low hanging fruit" for low-cost, high-impact restorations of tallow-invaded habitats. However, as their name suggests, they are hard to identify.



**Chris Gabler and colleagues on an airboat.
Photo credit: Andrew From, USGS National
Wetlands Research Center**

In my time at UH, I've had the pleasure of continuing my research on coastal prairie restoration and invasive species at the UH Coastal Center, which is home to some of the highest quality remnant coastal prairie left in the world, and which serves as a source of native seed for regional restoration efforts. My most recent restoration work has involved fire ecology and the effects of controlled burns on tallow seed banks, as well as finding straightforward ways to identify cryptic opportunities for easy restoration.

Beyond coastal prairie, I've also worked on restoring freshwater and coastal wetlands, as well as bottomland hardwood forests. Beyond Chinese tallow, my focal invaders have include alligatorweed, water hyacinth, and water lettuce in aquatic habitats; and Macartney rose, the Ligustrums, Johnsongrass, and Old World bluestems (to name a few) in terrestrial habitats. When I'm not working on restoration and invasion, I've been working on the impacts of climate change on coastal wetlands in Texas and across the Gulf Coast.

Describe your favorite outdoor activity. I love to hike and to try to capture the beauty around me via photography, and the two hobbies go hand in hand. I never know if I'm hiking to a great picture spot, or just taking pictures along the way. Probably both. When I can't get out to a trail, I love gardening with native plants at home. Sometimes I can't get to a trail because I'm too busy fishing.



Brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)
Photo credit: Chris Gabler

What is your favorite Texas plant and/or animal? Plant: Tough decision, but I'll go with bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). Not only have they been a frequent companion in my work and wanderings around Texas and Louisiana, but they are a beautiful bringing-together of forest and wetland, terrestrial and aquatic. For me, they combine many different aspects of my personal and professional interests. And, of course, my word, big cypresses are *majestic*. I've often felt, when surrounded by (relatively) old-growth cypress trees, with their grand buttressing and spires of knees, that I'm standing in nature's equivalent to a Gothic cathedral.

Animal: Just as tough... Brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). Pelicans are also iconic of where land and water meet, they have been a perennial companion, and they reflect the saltier side of my personal and professional interests. We both like to fish, and I admire their (albeit probably legendary) commitment to raising young. Pelicans are also a great example of successful conservation efforts, having rebounded so well after being at risk in the 1970s, and they give us hope for future conservation success.

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



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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 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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