

Faces of Conservation Legacy



BRIAN ROBERT, *Education Program Specialist – L.A.N.D.S. Intensive, Central Texas*

I grew up on a small ranch in Central Texas. I was blessed to go to the deer lease with my parents and grandparents each season as I was growing up. This helped develop my love for the outdoors and allowed me to enjoy the blessing that being outside provides.

I started teaching in 1995 and began working as the Central Texas Education Program Specialist for the Texas Wildlife Association in June of 2015. I spent most of my classroom years teaching chemistry, physics and aquatic science. I was also very active with our FFA chapter in Riesel. I'm an instructor with the Texas Brigades Bass Brigade and a cook for South Texas Bobwhite Brigade. I'm also a Huntmaster with the Texas Youth Hunting Program as well as a Texas Master Naturalist.

I live near the I-35 corridor and travel all over Texas. Seeing the habitat loss and fragmentation that is occurring across the state makes me fear that future generations of Texans will not be able to experience Texas' great outdoors. My love of hunting fuels my love of wild spaces and my desire to keep as much of Texas

undeveloped for future generations. I believe that I have been blessed with this job and the opportunity to educate the people of Texas about the importance of taking care of our environment as well as keeping as much of Texas "wild" as possible.

As an avid kayak fly fisherman, I appreciate the therapy that being out in nature on the water provides. My job with TWA allows me to teach people the importance of water and keeping it healthy. I hope that I can influence as many Texans as possible to love and appreciate Texas' outdoor beauty and resources as much as I do.



SARAH GRELLA, *Education Program Specialist – L.A.N.D.S. Intensive, North Texas*

My life has always been ruled by a desire to be outdoors.

As a child I grew up in New Mexico camping, hiking and fishing, and I spent my adolescence exploring the Cross Timbers region of North Texas. As I entered college unsure of what direction I wanted to go, my dad guided me by asking, "What do you enjoy most? If you follow what you love you will never 'work' a day in your life." To which I replied, "I enjoy being outdoors most!"





I went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in geography from the University of North Texas in December 2010. My studies focused in biogeography, which were highlighted with the co-presented research on white-tailed deer at the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers conference in Austin. I continued my education, earning a master’s degree in biology, also from UNT, in December 2014. My graduate career centered on bobwhite quail conservation and youth education. As the first of member of UNT Quail, I helped map North Texas bobwhite populations and contributed to UNT Quail’s youth and community outreach programs.

During this time, I developed my professional goal of serving my community as an intermediary between research and public education. After graduation as a Texas certified educator, I taught high school biology in the greater Fort Worth area. Although my desire to educate was met through this avenue, my true passion for encouraging youth to learn outside was better aligned in my volunteer work with the L.A.N.D.S. and Trinity River programs within the Texas Wildlife Association. It was through these volunteer efforts that in June of 2015 I was presented my current opportunity within TWA.

I am an education program specialist for Conservation Legacy’s L.A.N.D.S. Intensive team in North Texas, and I currently live in Fort Worth. I organize and implement around 30 field investigation days every school year. On the Trinity River and within the north Texas prairies, thousands of students explore their local ecosystems through these investigative events annually. The Texas Wildlife Association has allowed me the opportunity to apply my passion for the outdoors professionally every day for the past two and a half years—and, even better, share and nurture that passion in the next generation of Texans.



ELANOR DEAN, Education Program Specialist – Outreach Programs

As a child, I spent a lot of time playing outdoors, which introduced me to wildlife at an early age. My family and I

regularly visited state parks where I spent time climbing over rocks and chasing lizards. I regularly brought home small turtles I found on the street.

When it came time to apply to colleges, I didn’t know what subject I wanted to study until I discovered that Texas State University offered a Wildlife Biology program. What a perfect fit! I loved my wildlife classes. Once again I was observing and catching wildlife, all while earning a college degree. I followed up with a master’s in Wildlife Ecology, also at Texas State University.

Throughout my time at Texas State, I served as a member and eventually the secretary of the Wildlife Society’s student chapter. This allowed me to visit schools and outdoor events where I took snakes, animal pelts and skulls to share with students. I discovered my true calling is to educate others about wildlife, and I started working at the Texas Wildlife Association in 2012 as an educational contractor. I currently serve TWA as an Education Program Specialist for Outreach Programs.

My work for TWA focuses on K-8 grade lessons and activities. I have worked on several projects, including the quarterly youth mini-magazine *Critter Connections* and *Stewarding Texas – A Scientific Exploration*, which is a collection of 40 lessons about conservation of natural resources and land stewardship. My main focus, though, is split between two main program areas, Discovery Trunks and Distance Learning.

Through the Distance Learning program I offer live videoconferences, about 10 per semester, and develop On-demand Webinars about different wildlife topics that teachers can view anytime. I still get excited on videoconference days because I get to spend the day with a live Eastern Screech-owl or North American Porcupine. I love seeing my passion for these animals mirrored in the faces of the students during the live programs. Many of these students are inner city kids who have never seen these live animals up close. This gives them the opportunity to learn about Texas wildlife while encouraging conservation and land stewardship.

The Discovery Trunks are another way to introduce wildlife into Texas classrooms. We ship containers of hands-on materials into classrooms across the state along with specially developed lessons that align with each trunk topic. From animal skulls to butterflies, students get a hands-on learning experience which hopefully increases their curiosity and appreciation.

The future of Texas’ wildlife and natural resources falls on the younger generation, and I am so happy that I am able to provide these programs to engage young minds and make a difference. ☺

