

L.A.N.D.S. Intensive: Field Investigation Days

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Field trips are great learning opportunities where students are provided with hands-on investigative experiences.



A 4th grade student from Blooming Grove Elementary said her favorite part of the field day investigation was learning about the water macro invertebrates.

We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.
—Aldo Leopold

It is likely that students participating in the Texas Wildlife Association's Learning Across New Dimensions in Science (L.A.N.D.S.) Intensive program will not soon forget the invaluable lessons intended. Whether hunting for evidence of nest predation, role playing a quail trying to evade a predator or participating in a quail dissection, the sensory experiences that are by-products of L.A.N.D.S. Intensive programs help create lasting impressions and a healthy curiosity about Texas wildlife and our ecosystems.

A goal of L.A.N.D.S. Intensive is to create awareness in Texas youth about the ecosystems in which they live by

providing hands-on experiences in-situ. These experiences are made possible by the dedicated partnerships TWA has with volunteers, school districts, non-profit organizations, ranch owners, municipal water districts, state agencies and others.

In 2015, this dedication to taking the classroom outside resulted in providing 6,628 students across Texas with the opportunity to see, smell and feel the wild side of their world.

A typical field investigation day begins early in the morning on the banks of a local river system or in the native grasslands of a private ranch with 12 or more volunteers anxiously awaiting the arrival of school buses. When they arrive, 75 students stream out, many finding it difficult to contain their excitement for the surrounding novel environment.

Leading volunteers introduce themselves and share their professional backgrounds in

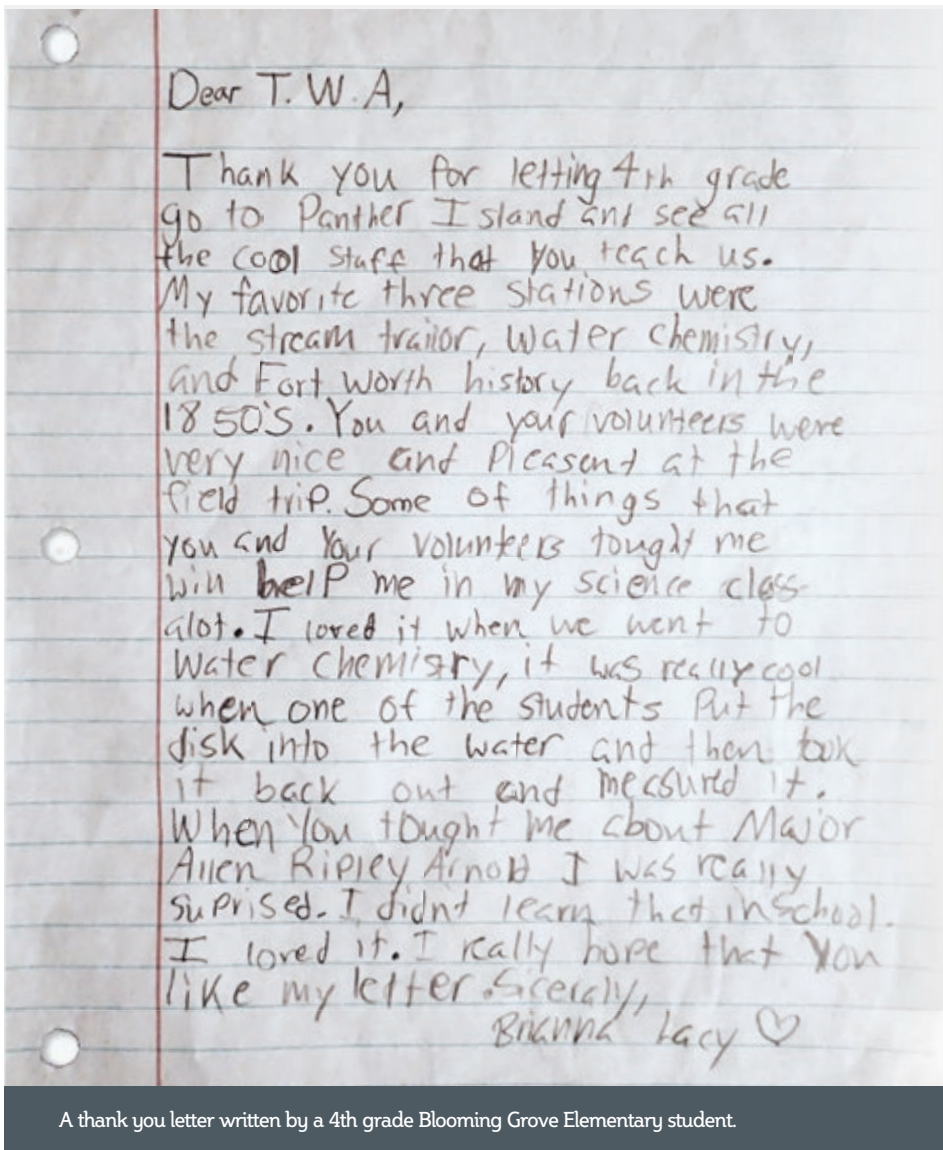
hopes of expanding students' perspectives of outdoor career opportunities. Then, the investigation begins.

Students are provided opportunities to explore aquatic health through water chemistry testing and macroinvertebrate collection. As they learn to sweep their net through the water and search for life in their sample, hesitation quickly transforms to enthusiastic confidence.

An appreciation and understanding for native and diverse flora is developed through rainfall simulations as they see first-hand the effects that differing surfaces have on groundwater versus run-off water accumulation.

By personally identifying predator tracts, insect population diversity, and habitat diversity students learn the important role Bobwhite Quail play as an indicator species for Texas rangeland health. It is the combination of each of these experiences





A thank you letter written by a 4th grade Blooming Grove Elementary student.

that helps students of all ages to create a holistic understanding of their local ecosystem.

These field investigations are for students who are 10-18 years old; but, despite the age difference, all of the students take ownership in their new knowledge and appreciation for the intricacies of their environment previously unknown to many of them.

After being asked if she thought participating in a field investigation day was worth the time and effort, one Fort Worth Country Day School biology student responded by writing: "I think that students cannot learn as well from just reading, looking at photos or watching videos and answering questions.

"For example, at a L.A.N.D.S. field

day at Bear Creek, we learned how to use radio telemetry to track and study animals. To learn radio telemetry, it is a lot easier if the student is actually able to use the equipment, something a field trip provides.

"Also, we could not have grasped a better understanding of the quail's ecosystem if we did not attend the Bear Creek field day. It allowed us to examine and experience the habitat first-hand, learning much more than we could have by reading alone. We gained a greater appreciation for the quail with a field trip."

It is responses such as this one along with enthusiastic thank you letters that confirm our efforts are worthwhile and that we are on course for accomplishing our mission. 🐾

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