



Desert Tracks

“Helping conserve the natural resources of the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands through research, education, & outreach.”

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RESEARCH IN ACTION:

Introducing the Trans-Pecos Native Plant Materials Initiative

Colin Shackelford, Bonnie J. Warnock, and Forrest Smith

Restoration of native plant communities is a growing need in Texas. Common restoration goals include providing habitat for wildlife, re-vegetating highway right of ways, and reclaiming oil and natural gas fields. Commercial sources of locally adapted native seeds for these kinds of projects are critical for successful restoration. Other than one or two grass species, there are currently no commercial sources of native seeds available that originated from the Trans-Pecos.

In an effort to improve native seed availability, the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI) and partners including Borderlands Research Institute (BRI) began the Texas Native Seeds project (TNS). Texas Native Seeds is a collaborative effort to develop native seed sources and restoration techniques for south, central, and west Texas and is modeled after CKWRI's South Texas Natives Project, which released 20 native seed selections to growers in the last decade.

In west Texas, this work is conducted through the Trans-Pecos Native Plant Materials Initiative led by BRI. The initiative's goal is to develop locally adapted seed that can one day be available to consumers through the commercial seed trade.

A critical part of the seed development process is the collection of multiple popula-



The Trans-Pecos Native Plant Materials Initiative will provide a commercial source for native seeds for habitat restoration, reclamation, and re-vegetation purposes.

tions of each target plant species. These collections allow researchers to identify populations with the best natural adaptation for successful restoration use.

In less than two years, we have already conducted 188 seed collections from 32 ranches in the region. As moisture conditions improve, we hope to obtain at least two collections of each species of interest from each county in the Trans-Pecos.

This long-term project will require considerable support from private landowners across the region. By allowing project staff to make small collections, landowners will help ensure that habitat restoration efforts in west Texas will have the best chance of success. If you are interested in helping with this initiative, please call us at 432.837.8488.



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The Borderlands Research Institute recently hosted former First Lady Laura Bush at the Holland Hotel for the “Taking Care of the Trans-Pecos” briefing. Mrs. Bush participated in a dialog with area landowners and conservation leaders about the conservation challenges facing west Texas.

From the Director—“Collaborative Conservation”

Collaborative conservation is a phrase that refers to partners working together toward a common conservation goal. For the Borderlands Research Institute, collaborative conservation is an everyday occurrence. Each and every project we are engaged in involves a host of conservation partners, ranging from state and federal agencies to small non-profits. But our primary partners in conservation are private landowners. Without private landowners, conservation doesn’t have a chance.

This point was reiterated in 2 events we recently hosted. The first being the 2012 Trans-Pecos Wildlife Conference which was attended by over 180 landowners, managers, and resource professionals. The second was the “Taking Care of the Trans-Pecos” briefing attended by former First Lady Laura Bush, private landowners, and some of our conservation partners.

facing conservation in the region. And each event concluded with a similar message—Private landowners are critical to conservation and they need more tools and information to more effectively manage the resources they have been entrusted with.

The Borderlands Research Institute is honored to work collaboratively with private landowners toward common conservation goals.

Each event identified and discussed the challenges

—*Louis A. Harveson*

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Panelists from the “Taking Care of the Trans-Pecos” briefing take a quick pose with Former First Lady Laura Bush. Panelists were (l-r) Jon Means (area rancher), Gary Joiner (Texas Wildlife Association), Louis Harveson (Borderlands Research Institute), Billy Tarrant (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department), Mrs. Laura Bush (Taking Care of Texas), David Wetzzel (Texas Bighorn Society), Blair Fitzsimmons (Texas Agricultural Land Trust), Neal Wilkins (Taking Care of Texas), and Carter Smith (Texas Parks and Wildlife Department).

Donor Spotlight: Trans-Pecos Native Plant Materials Initiative

The Trans-Pecos Native Plant Materials Initiative and Texas Native Seeds is a new initiative the Borderlands Research Institute has launched with its partners at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute.

The Initiative is funded through a combination of private and public sources. Founding sponsorship was provided by a grant from

the Texas Department of Transportation, augmented by generous support from the Dixon Water Foundation, Faye L. and William L. Cowden Foundation, Will Harte, and the Caesar Kleberg Partners Program.

CF Properties' Sierra la Rana Development and Pecos County Irrigation District #3 are currently providing plant material evalua-

tion sites for the project.

We are still seeking funding for a seed processing facility and a tractor with implements for future seed increase projects.

If you would like to find out more about this project or how to contribute, please contact Dr. Bonnie Warnock at 432.837.8488 or bwarnock@sulross.edu.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Borderlands Research Institute to support our research, outreach, and educational programs.

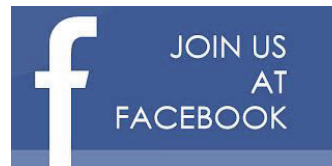
Borderlands Research Institute is now on Facebook!

The Borderlands Research Institute Facebook page is up and running. Take a minute to search for our page and remember to LIKE us. Updates on research projects, scheduled events, resource

links, and exciting news on happenings in the Trans-Pecos will be added frequently.

Also remember to share our page with your friends and help connect us with others

who may enjoy all that BRI does in the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands.



© Ryan Farmer

Join the Borderlands Research Institute on Facebook to see the latest pictures and reports from our numerous research activities!

Houston Safari Club Gives Scholarships to BRI Students

Over the last 13 years, the Houston Safari Club has awarded over 175 scholarships totaling over \$600,000 to the top wildlife students across Texas.

The purpose of the scholarship program is to invest in

the future of wildlife conservation—students.

Since 1999, the Houston Safari Club has supported over 25 different scholarships at Sul Ross State University. Most recently the Houston Safari Club pre-

sented \$4,000 scholarship checks to five graduate students from the Borderlands Research Institute. Scholarship recipients from the BRI included Thomas Janke, Justin Hoffman, Andy James, James Weaver, and Joseph Christensen.



Five graduate students from the BRI received \$4,000 scholarship checks from the Houston Safari Club earlier this month.

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Come Shoot to Support Desert Quail Research Program

The Trans-Pecos is blessed with an abundance and diversity of quails that is second to none. The Big Bend Region hosts 4 species of quail including northern bobwhite, scaled quail, Gambel's quail, and Montezuma quail. The BRI is a recognized leader in desert quail research and conservation.

Please join us November 17, 2012 for the 1st Annual Sierra La Rana 5-Stand Clay Pigeon Fun Shoot—all to benefit desert quail research and conservation!

Our partners at Sierra La Rana are hosting the Shoot at Sierra La Rana properties near Alpine

the weekend of ArtWalk 2012 (www.artwalkalpine.com).

Shooting begins at 9 a.m. and lasts until 4 p.m. including a catered lunch provided by the Reata Restaurant and a raffle ticket with a chance to win a Beretta shotgun. Entry fees are \$70/shooter (with the option to buy-back in). Shooting will be on a first-come, first-served basis. A professional instructor will also be in attendance to give tips to participants to improve their shooting skills. For more information and to register for the fun shoot please go to www.sierralarana.com/clay.

Please call the BRI office at 432.837.8488 if you have any questions about this event.



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Following the drought of the century, scaled quail populations are finally on the mend after timely rains.