

**FEBRUARY 2019**

Supporting wildlife conservation and other public benefits of ranching and private land stewardship.



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## FROM THE CEO

# A Memorial in the Brush

NEAL WILKINS

A couple of weeks ago, wildlife photographer Wyman Meinzer was at the San Antonio Viejo Ranch. I had mentioned to him in conversation that there were remains of an old airplane out in the middle of what we call the San Juan pasture - it is an area of the ranch that was once part of the adjacent Gallagher Ranch. Being the curious guy that he is, Wyman decided he would go find it and take some photos of the wreckage. Afterward, he got real interested in it and did some research. What he found was that there was an airplane crash documented on the Gallagher Ranch almost 40 years ago, and the pilot died in the crash. The pilot was a U.S. Border Patrol Agent - and he died in the line of duty.

Here is an account of the incident from the Department of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as reported at the time:

*Pilot Weldon Smith had been working with ground agents Roxy D. Kieffe and Frank Ureta, Jr., of Rio Grande City Border Patrol Station. They were trailing aliens on the Gallagor Ranch, about 10 miles north of Guerra, Jim Hogg County,*

*Texas. Pilot Smith returned to McAllen to refuel. As he was returning to the location of the aliens, he passed about 100 feet over Kieffe, relocated the trail, and started relaying the location to Kieffe. He said, "I found the tr-" and quit transmitting in mid-sentence. Officer Kieffe did not see the crash, but saw the smoke and ran toward it. The plane was completely engulfed in flames, destroyed by the impact and fire. Pilot Smith died on initial impact. A Justice of the Peace from Hebbronville, Texas, held an inquest upon arrival at the scene of the accident and pronounced Pilot Smith dead. Subsequent investigation determined that the aircraft had stalled and the pilot was unable to recover from the stall. Smith was buried in Valley Memorial Gardens in McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas. Smith joined the US Border Patrol on November 2, 1970 and served one month short of nine years.*



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*The wreckage of a plane on part of the former Gallagher Ranch, now part of the San Antonio Viejo - likely the 40-year-old remains of the plane flown by US Border Patrol Agent Weldon Smith.*



*Wyman Meinzer isn't the only person to document plane wreckage on the East ranches. This image from the East Foundation Archives documents folks surveying plane debris.*

**U.S. Border Patrol Agent  
Weldon Smith  
(July 18, 1939 - October 19, 1979)**

Weldon Smith was 40 years old at the time of his death, and he already had a nine year career with the Border Patrol and he served as State Trooper prior to that. Some testimony before U.S. Congress in 1999 reveals that he was the only Agent killed in the line of duty in 1979, but he joined a long list of Agents killed in the line of duty reaching back to 1919. Agent Smith's plane wreckage has remained where it is for the last 40 years, and it serves as an isolated and silent memorial to his commitment to service.



*U.S. Border Patrol Agent Weldon Smith in his uniform circa early 1970s.*

This caused me to consider the other ways in which the dedication to service from law enforcement can go unappreciated simply because it happens in isolated areas. Below is an illustration from this last month

**Game Wardens**

It was late on a Sunday afternoon, and after a long drive I pulled through the gate at the San Antonio Viejo Ranch. On the long road to headquarters I met only two pickups, the first driven by our Security Manager and former Game Warden, Matt Robinson. Behind Matt's truck was Carlos Maldonado, Game Warden for Jim Hogg County. Carlos is often on the ranch carrying out his duties, but he was there that day to help get everything set

for the coming invasion – an invasion of eighth graders. Throughout the week to follow, we would host over 1,700 students and teachers from local school districts of Laredo, Hebbronville, Roma, Bruni, Premont, Falfurrias, and Freer. This was one of our annual *Behind the Gates* events where our team's job was to make sure that each kid visiting the ranch learned something important about ranching, wildlife, livestock, and history. We depend on a lot of help for this event. We have had some sponsorship from Capital Farm Credit, and we draw upon experts from lots of groups. I won't try to list them here – but we really do appreciate their contributions.

One of the satisfying things about the next week on the ranch was watching kids get acquainted with the work of our State's Game Wardens. Carlos Maldonado was joined by Dusty Jansky and Aiden Dietz from Starr County, as well as Gloria Alcaez and James Ramirez from Zapata County. Together with wildlife biologist Eric Garza, they taught kids about the role of Game Wardens, wildlife management, and the mission of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. For these Game Wardens to take the time to invest in these kids took commitment over and above what is simply required to do their job.



*Game Warden Dusty Jansky, Starr County*

Because most of what a Game Warden does goes unseen, it is easy to see how they might be underappreciated. With both Chris Huff and Matt Robinson being retired Game Wardens, anyone at the East Foundation gets to hear a lot of Game Warden stories – and this gives us a better appreciation for their commitment. They often risk their lives to do their job – and sometimes they get to help some eighth graders appreciate what they do.



*Game Warden Carlos Maldonado, Jim Hogg County*



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**LOCATIONS**

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San Antonio Viejo Ranch  
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San Antonio  
200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 410  
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**PROJECT PROFILE**

# Land Stewardship Ambassadors

**EDUCATION TEAM**

The East Foundation operates its Education program using a three-pronged approach, because our students learn better when they are inspired by the outdoors. First, we bring education materials into the classroom. In our partnership with the Texas Wildlife Association, we deliver natural resources curriculum that is aligned with state science learning objectives throughout Valley classrooms, and beyond. Second, we bring K-12 students onto our lands. For instance, in partnership with IDEA Public Schools, and many, many others, we host an annual *Behind the Gates* event for all their fifth graders, over 1,500 students per week.

Lastly, we work through partnerships to deliver our land stewardship message to the youth of Texas. For example, the East Foundation's Land Stewardship Lab at the Witte Museum reaches tens of thousands of students annually with the "land stewardship" message.

One major and emerging focal area is our new Land Stewardship Ambassadors program, being conducted in partnership with the Witte Museum. This program is a ten-week course for high school students aimed at 1) increasing awareness of land stewardship principles, 2) promoting civil engagement, and 3) exposing students to careers related to land stewardship. There are two cohorts for this course – one in San Antonio with 15 students and one in Laredo with 15 students. During the first eight weeks, students meet weekly for two hours to participate in discussions and activities related to given topics. During the final two weeks, both cohorts will come together – first at the Witte Museum in San Antonio and then on our San Antonio Viejo Ranch for an overnight trip.

Course topics include:

- What is a Land Steward?
- History of Conservation
- Social Aspects
- Policies
- Economics
- Water
- Wildlife Management
- Diversity in Conservation
- Witte Museum and The Land Ethic
- Working Lands on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch



*East Foundation Educator Masi Mejia and the Land Stewardship Ambassadors from the Laredo cohort.*

Land Stewardship Ambassadors will complete a final oral project to share their knowledge and understanding of topics related to land stewardship in their communities. Students are already expressing heightened interest in serving as a voice as it relates to water, wildlife habitat, land management, and conservation issues.

We are only a couple of weeks into the program, but organizers, educators, and parents have all been inspired by our budding Land Stewardship Ambassadors – all the students are truly exceptional!

# Aerial Application of Herbicide for Brush Management – A Cost Effective Option for Mitigating the Impacts of Drought

TODD SNELGROVE

Over the last several decades, rangelands on many ranches in south Texas were cleared of native brush and converted to “improved” pastures made up of introduced grasses such as KR bluestem, bermuda, and buffel grass. The East Foundation ranches escaped much of this conversion and are dominated by native rangelands; however, they have not been completely immune. Our Santa Rosa Ranch is a prime example of this as large portions of it were converted to bermudagrass pasture 30 to 40 years ago. Improved pastures in south Texas require intensive management; if not, they will be overtaken by brush encroachment. In 2015, the northern half of the Santa Rosa was greater than 70% mesquite cover. Over the previous 30 years it had evolved from a mostly open rangeland marked by a scattering of mesquite mottes to a regrowth mesquite thicket

with a reputation for producing feral hogs, nilgai, and fire ants. Beneath that rough exterior and bad reputation were remnants of bermuda grass and non-native grasses. Some people look at this as a 100-year ecological restoration nightmare. At the East Foundation, we looked at this as an opportunity to try something different.

The Santa Rosa averages over 27 inches of rain annually and has some of our most productive soils giving it tremendous potential for producing forage. What if we could take advantage of the introduced grasses on the Santa Rosa? Could we enhance forage production while improving habitat? Can we increase the carrying capacity of the Santa Rosa? In times of drought could we relieve pressure on our native rangelands by better utilizing the non-native grasses on the Santa Rosa?

In late June of 2015, we took the first step at tapping into this potential by aerial spraying 400 acres of regrowth mesquite dominated pasture split evenly between two different herbicide mixes. Prior to the herbicide treatment, this pasture was producing less than 300 pounds per acre of forage due to the dense mesquite canopy. Initial results were promising as we achieved 80 to 90% canopy defoliation and the pasture was producing in excess of 5,000 pounds per acre of forage eighteen months post spraying. Based on these results we developed and implemented a multi-year plan to reclaim mesquite encroached rangelands, increase forage production, and enhance wildlife habitat at landscape scales through aerial herbicide applications followed by prescribed fire. Through 2017 and 2018 we sprayed over 9,500 acres. Of the sprayed acres, approximately 3,100 acres has been designated as drought relief pasture.

Today, the premise underlying the Santa Rosa brush management project remains unchanged. A small percentage of the Foundation’s ranchland is dominated by mesquite encroached non-native pastures with tremendous forage potential. Can we give ourselves the ability to better manage our native habitats while increasing our overall bottom line by developing these resources for drought relief? During times of extended drought, ranchers are faced with the decision to destock pastures forcing them to sell cattle at what are often reduced prices. Once drought conditions diminish it takes years to rebuild their herd and at significant cost. Drought relief pastures

*Mesquite canopy reduction and timely rainfall produced an amazing forage response on the Santa Rosa. Pictured here, Zane Herrin, King Ranch Institute of Ranch Management graduate student and former East Foundation Livestock Manager.*



allow us to forego selling large portions of our herd during a drought leading to significant cost savings over time and allowing us to retain our genetic stock. These assumptions were put to the test much sooner than we had hoped.

With below average rain in the spring of 2017, our nine-month accumulations of rainfall across most of our rangelands dropped below the long-term average in August of 2017. Conditions worsened and by February 2018 rainfall accumulations were less than 50% of average. This was a drought severity not experienced since the spring of 2013. With most of our rangelands under severe drought conditions we reduced cattle stocking rates across most of the Foundation's rangelands and vacated more than 70,000 acres of native rangelands by late spring 2018. Typically, we'd accomplish this by culling older and open cows, selling stockers and replacement heifers, and if conditions were dire selling a portion of our most productive cows. We were able to avoid the worst of these options by taking advantage of the gains we had made on Santa Rosa. With increased forage availability directly resulting from our extensive brush management program over the last three years we were able to increase by 40% stocking on the Santa Rosa Ranch with cattle from our vacated native rangelands. Although we had to utilize our drought relief pastures a little earlier than anticipated and had to forego some prescribed burning our Santa Rosa Ranch brush management plan is working as anticipated. In fact, with heavy fall rains followed by a wet winter the Santa Rosa is still holding strong allowing our vacated native rangelands additional time to recover.

We are committed to finding solutions for both wildlife conservation and livestock production. Our response to the latest drought is a prime example of how we are forced to make decisions and trade-offs that enable us to be better land stewards. We continue to monitor outcomes, evaluate their success or failure, adapt, and share those results.

## ALUMNI PROFILE



### JANEL ORTIZ

Janel's only exposure to wildlife was visiting zoos as a kid growing up in urban Los Angeles County. For her undergraduate degree, she moved to Northern California with plans to become a companion animal veterinarian and received her B.S. in Animal Science from the University of California, Davis. However, toward the end of her time there she found a new passion for wildlife research volunteering on a research project on Greater Sage Grouse reproductive behavior. It was with that project that the PI asked her if she had considered graduate school. Not knowing what that was exactly or what it entailed, all she knew was that she wanted to conduct wildlife research.

Fast forward two years, after various internships, volunteer stints, and a non-wildlife related job she returned to California State University, Los Angeles to receive her M.S. in Biology and a certificate in GIS, conducting research on native and non-native tree squirrels. There she was introduced to K-12 ecology education while working in a seventh grade science classroom and it stuck! She wanted a career in education which prompted her to apply for one of CKWRI's

first graduate positions related to wildlife education. Her PhD research focused on developing and evaluating curriculum on wild birds, but aside from that, Janel got her chance to work in the field continuing a long-term avian monitoring program on three of East Foundation's ranches: San Antonio Viejo, Santa Rosa, and El Sauz.

Following the completion of her PhD, Janel accepted a position as a Diversity Postdoctoral Fellow in Biology at the University of San Diego in California. Her work continues to use her curriculum evaluation and bird survey skills, this time evaluating undergraduate biology courses and monitoring introduced parrots of Southern California.

#### **In her own words:**

"Being out on the East ranches were the most peaceful and beautiful moments in my life. Getting out of the hustle and bustle of city living and having the opportunity to study and enjoy a natural setting was an experience I will never forget. I miss South Texas wildlife, the landscape, and the people I had the opportunity to work with at East. Working side-by-side with various grad students and the East Foundation staff made me feel right at home and for that I am so thankful.

I love that the East Foundation involves graduate students not only to conduct research but to participate in their educational programs as well. Education and outreach are near and dear to my heart and I am so grateful that I had the chance to help out at a variety of programs! I love that they see the value in informing their community about land stewardship and how it impacts habitat and wildlife."

# Tales and Tips from a Texas Game Warden

CHRIS HUFF

As we head into spring, we continue to be blessed with nice showers across our properties. Winter weeds are growing and the cattle are fat. Spring is my favorite time of the year. I can't wait to see the great display of wild flowers this spring will bring. What a way to start the year.

We are still in the process of finalizing the contract for the construction of the El Sauz headquarters building. We hope to have this project up and running sometime in February.

As most of you know, Matt, our Security Manager and I are both retired game wardens. We use our combined experience and skills of over 64 years to ensure that the Foundation's employees, partners and guests remain safe while they are on our properties. We also use our experience and skills to ensure that the Foundation's assets, our land, livestock, wildlife, facilities, etc., are well safeguarded. Before I get off into how we safeguard our personnel and assets in today's settings, let me give you a brief history of the smuggling and poaching problems we would encounter in the past on the East Ranches during the 70s and 80s.

I began my career as a game warden in the mid-70s. During this period, drug trafficking, human smuggling, and poaching were rampant. Road hunting, day or night, was a big thing. I would file over 75 cases a year just for this offense. Also during this time, the Border Patrol checkpoint on FM1017 was located at the Starr/Jim Hogg County line. In an effort to circumvent the check point, drug smugglers would travel north on FM649, then cut through the East's San Antonio Viejo Ranch back to FM1017 north of the Border Patrol checkpoint and then they were home free. The smugglers would use vehicles and ATVs to cut across though the ranches. However, the most fun job was to chase backpackers on the East Ranch. "Backpackers," as we would call them, applied to poachers that would enter the property carrying enough supplies with them to stay for extended periods of time, up to a week in some cases.

Since we did not have access to the sophisticated high tech equipment that is available today, we would use a combination of the following techniques, tactics and tools to combat these violators:

- Binoculars - The best tool that the department ever issued us.
- GPS - Not available to us until the 80s.
- Informants - Ranch personnel reporting tracks and suspicious activity and information from other law enforcement officers and general public.
- Sign Cutting - Looking for tracks from drags, footprints, vehicles and ATVs, etc.
- ATVs and Horseback - For tracking and apprehension of violators.
- Officer Presence - Time spent on the ground tracking and listening for shots.
- Overnight Camping Facilities - These were very primitive. We used the La Perla house for our camp house.



*A bird's-eye-view of a peaceful morning on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch.*

Our Service Department has remained busy during the month of January, performing maintenance of ranch vehicles and equipment during the absence of our ranch personnel who returned to Mexico for the holidays. The service department has also been busy performing maintenance on our San Antonio Viejo headquarters landscapes and facilities in preparation for our annual *Behind the Gates* event which brought over 1,700 students onto our properties.

Field Operations and ranch personnel have laid over five miles of pipelines at the El Sauz Ranch and are in the process of installing a large submersible pump in a high volume well in an attempt to create a more reliable water source to provide better water distribution for our livestock.



*Poachers in South Texas sometimes use shoes like these to disguise their tracks and avoid detection.*

Now, the poachers also had some tools and tactics that they would use. They would disguise their footprints by dragging branches behind them, cover their shoes with burlap or carpet or walk on blacktop roads, just to mention a

few. Some innovative characters would laminate the soles of their boots and then carve the likeness of cow hooves into the sole in an attempt to avoid the detection of human footprints.

In the late 80s, state legislature passed a bill that enhanced the penalties for trespassing and poaching. Besides an increase in fines, this bill also enhanced the jail time for trespassing and poaching and on second offense violators, it increased the penalty from a misdemeanor to a felony case. After a year or so, poaching slowed down considerably. I guess the poachers finally got ol' Baretta's message, *If you can't do the time, don't do the crime.*

Listed below are some of the tactics that we use in today's setting to accomplish our mission:

- We disk along perimeter fence lines to provide an appearance that someone is taking care of the property.
- We patrol perimeter fence lines on a regular basis creating an officer presence, an check for sign or tracks of illegal entry into the property.
- We use security cameras that provide us with real time photos to monitor vehicular and human foot traffic.
- We have an excellent working relationship with Border Patrol, Game Wardens and local law enforcement and we welcome them onto our properties.
- Our employees and research personnel are asked to notify us of any suspicious activity they might encounter while performing their duties on our ranches.

Note that the tactics that we use today are similar to the ones used in the early years.

If you are interested in some good game warden stories, I recommend a book written by Mike Bradshaw titled *Texas Game Warden Chronicles*. Mike was a game warden stationed in Carrizo Springs. The book includes a chapter of a poaching ring that we busted on the San Antonio Viejo Ranch back in the 80s. It's a great book! You can order it by emailing [contact@mikebradshaw.org](mailto:contact@mikebradshaw.org).

## EMPLOYEE PROFILE



### ISHA ANES

Isha is a Texas native, born in Weslaco. Growing up, her family members were big enthusiasts of outdoor activities, music, and reading. Being close to her family and spending time with her grandmothers inspired her love of dancing and passion for cooking big meals.

Before moving to San Antonio, Isha worked for NASA at the Johnson Space Center as a Branch Secretary. She provided administrative support for the team that designed the Onboard Display Interface Network for the Space Shuttle and to the Procurement Department. In 2009, she married her husband, Carlos,

moved to San Antonio, and worked as a Data Analyst and Administrator at a property tax consulting firm.

Isha joined the East Foundation in 2016. She provides administrative support to the investment department, legal department, and other departments as needed. At the East Foundation, Isha is the embodiment of "other duties as assigned." You can find her staffing the front desk at the San Antonio office, helping at Behind the Gates and other ranch events, or on the painting crew for remodel projects.

Isha enjoys seeing the benefits of the Foundation's outreach efforts. She appreciates students having the opportunity to learn what a working ranch does for their community. With that knowledge, they can choose careers that align with the mission of the Foundation.

In her free time, Isha likes to camp at Big Bend National Park. She loves hiking and traveling and is on a mission to visit all 50 states. She enjoys cooking, trying out new recipes, and volunteering her friends for taste tests. A true San Antonian, Isha is a fan of NBA basketball and loves going to Spurs games.

## Past Meetings & Events

### NOVEMBER 5-9

In partnership with IDEA public schools, we conducted *Behind the Gates* field days on our El Sauz Ranch, reaching more than 1,500 students.

### JANUARY 21-25

More than 1,700 students from Falfurrias, Hebbbronville, Laredo, Roma, San Isidro, and Zapata attended our *Behind the Gates* field days on our San Antonio Viejo Ranch.



Educator Elisa Velador interacts with IDEA Public School students at the Watershed Simulation station at the El Sauz Ranch.

# Upcoming Events

## FEBRUARY 11-15

Trey Dyer and Allie Biedenharn will staff a booth at the NAPE Summit in Houston, Texas.

## FEBRUARY 16

Elisa Velador will staff a booth at the Pioneer Ranching Crafts Day at the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg, Texas.

## FEBRUARY 21-23

Maria Hernandez and Kristine Robb will staff a booth at the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society in Montgomery, Texas.

## MARCH 26-27

Board of Directors and Professional Advisors joint meeting on our El Sauz Ranch.

## MARCH 28-31

Maria Hernandez will staff a booth at the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Convention in Fort Worth, Texas.

## RANCH REPORT

# Spring Forward

GILLY RIOJAS

It's early February and spring is right around the corner. After the rain this fall and a few showers here and there, we have suitable soil moisture across most of our lands. Forbs are beginning to grow and we're looking forward to lots of green grass, happy cows, and outstanding wildlife.

The first of the year through mid-July is our busiest season at the East Foundation Ranches. During these months we'll brand and wean fall calves and brand spring calves, so most of our days will be full of cattle work. We'll work every ranch and pasture in some form or fashion over the next five months and hopefully see every cow on every ranch.

Thankfully, we have a little extra help over the spring semester. Two interns, Dakota Kempken, a recent graduate of Sam Houston State University and Molli Foxley, a recent graduate of Louisiana State University have joined us at the East Foundation Ranches. We are excited to work with them and help them further their on-the-job training and education.

Most of our rangelands are in the Wild Horse Desert. We ranch in a tough dry climate, so our constant concern

is not *When is the next drought?* but *How long will the next drought last?* To be a successful operation in such a tough climate, we must be flexible. Over the last year, we've worked very diligently to make sure our pastures have appropriate carrying capacities. We measure available forage, grazeable acres, and soil sites to determine how many animal units should graze in each pasture. We want to increase the health of our pastures to benefit both our cattle and wildlife.

We set aside some pastures and designate them flex pastures. Flex pastures do not have cattle in them year-round. They are used for stocker cattle or other types of short duration cattle. By observing proper carrying capacities and having flex pastures available, we provide ourselves with options during drought that positively impact the longevity of our cow herd. In addition to setting aside flex pastures, we recently brought in stocker steers to turn out on some of our native rangelands. They will utilize the outstanding forb crop that is available to graze. With the addition of stockers steers, our animal unit base has changed from 100% cow/calf to stockers and cow/calf. Flexibility in our herd allows us to maintain its integrity and continue to improve our rangelands.

*Pictured here, cattle are weaned and branded in the Coloraditas. After last year's drought, the cattle may be in different pastures, but the work of weaning and branding remains the same.*



© Sarah Herrin

Sarah Herrin

# A Greater Patrol Presence

MATT ROBINSON

The government shutdown did not seem to affect the UDA traffic or the ability of the Border Patrol to react. Although traffic has been slower than normal, Border Patrol has answered and reacted to every call I have made. We truly appreciate their efforts in the face of their personal sacrifice.

Abe Woodard is conducting a quail study on the Buena Vista division of the East Foundation. Part of this study requires periodic helicopter surveys of the quail population. In order to count the quail, they have to fly low and slow and are able to see almost every foot of the survey area during these flights. On one such flight, Abe was assisted by Landon Schofield and Andrea Bruno. I received a call from Landon saying that they had seen what they thought was the skeletal remains of four UDA's. They were unable to stop and check for sure because it would impact the data collection for Abe's research, but they were able to mark the GPS locations for each site.

Later that day, Abe told me that he was sure that at least one was human skeletal remains. It takes a group of authorities to legally document and collect the remains. The Jim Hogg Sheriff's Department, Justice of the Peace, a funeral home, Border Patrol and Game Warden were contacted as well as Jason Haynes to help transport everyone around. The Justice of the Peace pronounces the person deceased, the Sheriff's Office investigator looks for sign of foul play, and everyone looks for identification while the funeral home personnel gather the remains for burial. We met in Hebronville and caravanned to Buena Vista where we met Abe and Andrea to help lead us to the areas.

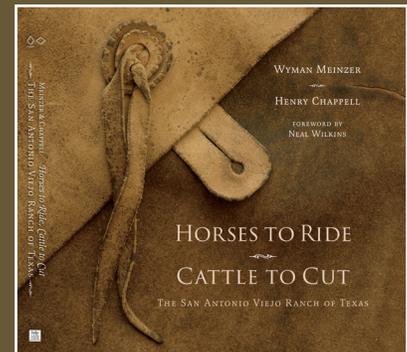
The first site was thought to have two remains, but thankfully, only had one. The hipbone was mistaken for a second skull from the helicopter. We were lucky

to locate a billfold associated with the remains with identification inside. We moved to the second site where we found only a skull and repeated the process. We found no identification at this site. Finally, we headed to the last site where we found the skull of a javelina. The results of the long day were that we found two sets of skeletal remains which had been there a minimum of six months, but probably a lot longer. I apologize for relaying the step-by-step gory details, but did it because most people don't realize what needs to be accomplished and what occurs all too often on our South Texas ranchlands.

While the quail study group was flying, they also noticed a suspicious vehicle on the ranch. The researchers described it as a blue Ford pickup larger than an F-150. The driver was a large Hispanic male with a beard. He was out of the truck as they flew over and gave them a friendly wave. We have no vehicle or person that should be on the ranch that fits that description. In the past, smuggling vehicles have cut fences and passed through the Buena Vista. I admit a smuggler waving at a helicopter flying over would be unusual. I made calls to everyone I could think of: Border Patrol in Hebronville, Border Patrol in Harlingen, Border Patrol in Falfurrias, Weather Station personnel, cowboys, researchers, and area quail guides. I was unable to get any information as to who this was so Game Warden Carlos Maldonado and I looked for signs on the whole perimeter of the 15,106-acre Buena Vista. We found no cut fence or sign of illegal entry. Since we found nothing, I put up extra cameras and monitored the area more closely. About a month later, I attended a Border Patrol meeting in Hebronville. The camera crew gave a presentation and showed pictures of the unmarked vehicles they

In the vast Wild Horse Desert of South Texas lies one of the most storied ranches in Texas. The 150,000-acre San Antonio Viejo, carved out of borderland thornscrub and amassed from Spanish land-grant tracts over more than a century, embodies an extraordinary ecosystem and a rich human history known by few.

Photographer Wyman Meinzer explored the ranch for three years, in all seasons and weathers, to reveal its story in images from sweeping panoramas, to astonishing wildlife shots, to illuminating moments in the lives of working cowboys and their herds. Author Henry Chappell weaves the ranch's complex story with a historian's attention to detail, a novelist's flair, and an outdoorsman's keen understanding of the natural world.



Order your copy of  
East Foundation's

*Horses to Ride, Cattle to Cut:  
The San Antonio Viejo  
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use. One was a black Ford F-250 and one of the camera guys was a large Hispanic beardless guy. This is where my many decades of intense law enforcement training comes in handy. After lots of deliberation and reviewing of the evidence, I approached the camera guy during a break and asked if he had waved at the helicopter on the Buena Vista. Mystery solved! On to the next problem.

Be prepared when you're on the East Foundation properties. This can mean so many simple things like making sure you have plenty of water, your vehicle has plenty of fuel, you have your phone charged, etc., etc., etc. We recently hosted an educational presentation to area middle schools called *Behind the Gates*. Around 1,700 students attended the event over a one-week period. They are told to come prepared because the event is held in open tents and subject to weather changes. Well, a northern blew in about mid-week and being prepared became very important. I learned a very

good saying from Allie Biedenharn while she was teaching one of these groups. One the students exclaimed, "Miss! The weather is bad and it's cold!" to which she replied, "There is no bad weather, just bad clothing."

Game Warden Carlos Maldonado and I have been sitting out and patrolling the wheels off of our vehicles for poachers or even signs of poachers and came up empty-handed this year. I would like to think the lack of illegal activity is due to a greater patrol presence. We will not tell anyone, but it is probably because they are just too darn sneaky for us to catch. I told Carlos the other day, "Maybe we should find another post to hide behind," to which he replied, "that's probably right."

"Either that or one of us needs to lose some weight - parts are starting to stick out." I told him that there would be more room behind here if he would park his patrol truck somewhere else!



*Game Warden Carlos Maldonado and Security Manager Matt Robinson share a unique hiding spot.*