Jacquelyn M. Tleimat
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Education

Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi 4.0 GPA
Earned Ph.D. in Marine Biology, August 2025
Major Adviser: Shawn McCracken, Ph.D.
Dissertation: The tortoise and the pathogen: monitoring disease status and stressors in wild Texas tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*) populations

Texas State University 4.0 GPA
Earned M.S. in Wildlife Ecology, August 2021
Major Adviser: Sarah Fritts, Ph.D.
Thesis: Monitoring the habitat and spatial associations of two threatened primates along a conservation area in Western Ecuador

Texas State University 3.54 GPA
Earned B.S. in Wildlife Biology, December 2017
Graduated Cum Laude

Professional Appointment

Postdoctoral Research Assistant (September '25 – current)
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, Department of Life Sciences
Advisor: Shawn McCracken, Ph.D.

Relevant Employment Experience

September '21 – July '25 (20 hours/week) Research Assistant
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

June '21 – August '21 (20 hours/week) Task Worker
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

September '18 – May '21 (20 hours/week) Instructional/Research Assistant
Texas State University, San Marcos, TX
Labs taught: **Bio 1321** – Ecology, Evolution, & Society
Bio 1131 – Organismal Biology
Bio 4422 – Mammalogy
Bio 4451 – Tropical Biology (developed some lab material)
Bio 4420 – Natural History of Vertebrates

May '16 – August '16 (40 hours/week) Corps Member
American Conservation Experience, Flagstaff, AZ
Participating in a variety of conservation projects across the southwest region including trail maintenance, seed collection, and invasive species removal

May '15 – August '15 (40 hours/week) Ranch Hand
Cascabel Ranch, Hebbronville, TX
Basic ranch upkeep, landscaping, and habitat creation for Northern bobwhites

Research Experience

Texas tortoise repatriation program
Organizing a forfeiture event for Texas tortoises in collaboration with Texas Parks and Wildlife. Assisting with messaging to the public. Collecting disease and genetic samples from forfeited Texas tortoises. Recording health conditions and morphometric measures of forfeited Texas tortoises (180+). Arranging temporary housing for a quarantine period (partners from Houston Zoo, Reptile Conservation International, Lamar Bruni Vergara Environmental Science Center, Gladys Porter Zoo, Austin Wildlife Rescue, and Central Texas Tortoise Rescue). Arranging release sites on public and private properties (2 private stakeholders). Creating and updating protocols. Organizing and managing field volunteers. Hosting meetings with partners to update practices. Constructing and removing soft release pens. Driving skid steer. Installing electric fence. Relocating released Texas tortoises with cellular telemetry. Creating and maintaining lab website. (2025-current)

Texas Tortoise Task Force
Contacting agencies to create a collaborative network (Master Naturalist, Quail Forever, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Plateau Land & Wildlife) and reaching out to appropriate social media outlets (Texas Master Naturalists, Texas Turtles, Field Herpers of Texas) to raise awareness of the Texas tortoise monitoring project through organized presentations and posts to get community science participation through iNaturalist. Collecting blood and shell fungal samples. Management and organization of large datasets (9+ TB) for model analysis. Annotating photos using CVAT for AI detection. Cultivation of BSL-II fungal samples, DNA extraction, quantification (nanodrop and QuBit), gradient PCR, PCR, sample dilution, and gel analysis using aseptic technique. Archiving fungal and bacterial cultures. Sequence alignment and BLAST analysis. Coordination with private landowners (15+ different individuals/private organizations) and public land managers to secure permits and survey access. Managing field volunteers (groups of 2-10) and undergraduate lab technicians in adverse field conditions. (2021-2024)

Canopy Acoustic and Imagery Project
Building weatherproof cases (utilizing power tools and soldering) for AudioMoths, utilizing a Big Shot to set a climbing line, climbing trees, placement of trail cameras and AudioMoths in the canopy, analyzing and managing large sets of data, identifying primate calls and anthropogenic noise (i.e., chainsaws, gunshots, and cars) in Kaleidoscope, using Wildlife Insights to identify wildlife through trail cameras, running single and multi-species hierarchical occupancy models, GLMs, creating maps and conducting analysis in QGIS (2019-2021)

Snapshot USA
Placing, maintaining, and analyzing camera trap data for a large-scale project (participation 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023, 2025)

Meta-Analysis
Gathering research articles from search engines using Boolean phrases, extracting relevant data, standardizing data for comparison (2019)

IRES NSF in Sabah, Borneo

Surveying small mammal and bat communities across different disturbance types to set a baseline before potential conversion to agroforestry practices (2018)

Dispersal Barriers for Anurans in Ecuador
Two months experience as a field assistant sampling and processing anurans, as well as conducting acoustic surveys in Ecuador (2018)

Invertebrate Trapping
Collecting invertebrates with suspended light traps and sorting beetles with an aspirator in Ecuador (2017)

Mammal Sampling
Experience using and setting; Sherman Traps, Tomahawks, Wire Mesh Traps, Harp Traps and Mist Nets to live trap mammals as well as collecting morphometric measurements, collecting ectoparasites, attaching thread spools to gather microhabitat data, and generating random points for setting transects and grids

Bird Sampling
Identifying birds based off their song for point count surveys, as well as handling birds

Vegetation Surveys
Experience using Daubenmire Frames, Point Center Quarter techniques, Spherical Densiometers, Line Intercept techniques, Stem Sample Collection, Diameter at Breast Height tapes, and Vertical Profile Boards. Experience characterizing wetland communities in Texas using spiral quadrat surveys.

Radio Telemetry
Tracking Bobwhite Quail and Texas tortoise home ranges using radio and cellular telemetry

Peer-Reviewed Publications

7. **Tleimat, J.M.,** E. Krell, S.F. McCracken. 2026. Needle in a haystack: Towards the use of machine learning to detect Texas tortoises in large datasets. Amphibian & Reptile Conservation. 20(1): e356.

6. Rooney, B., R. Kays, M. Cove, W. McShea, **et al.** 2025. Snapshot USA 2019-2023: The first five years of data from a coordinated camera trap survey of the United States. Global Ecology and Biogeography 34(1): e13941.

5. Rega-Brodsky, C.C., Weiss, K.C., Green, A.M., Iannarilli, F., **Tleimat, J.M.,** Fritts, S., Herrera, D.J., Fisher-Reid, M.C., Compton, J.A., Lafferty, D.J. and Allen, M.L. 2023. Mammalian functional diversity and trait responses to anthropogenic and environmental factors across the contiguous USA. *Urban Ecosystems*, pp.1-14.

4. **Tleimat, J.M**., S. R. Fritts, R.M. Brunner, R.L. Lynch, D. Rodriguez, S. F. McCracken. 2022. Economic pressures of Covid-19 lockdowns result in increased timber extraction within a critically endangered region: a case study from the Pacific Forest of Ecuador. Ecology and Evolution. https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.9550

3. Vasquez, M.P., **J.M. Tleimat**, R.J. Rylander, S.R. Fritts. 2022. Use of Plastic as Nest Materials by Black-crested Titmice Along an Urban Gradient. Journal of Wildlife and Fisheries Management. https://doi.org/10.3996/jfwm-21-058

2. Cove, M., R. Kays, W. McShea, **et al**. 2021. SNAPSHOT USA 2019: the first coordinated national camera trap survey of the United States. Ecology.

1. **Tleimat, J.M.,** C.J. Bintliff, A.R. MacLaren, S.F. McCracken, and M.R.J. Forstner. 2016. Geographic Distribution – Terrell Co., Texas. *Rena dulcis dulcis*. Herpetological Review 47(4): 631

Publications in Progress

Orgill, M., S. Schiereck, **J.M. Tleimat,** and T.B.T. Bowling. 2026. Geographic Distribution – San Patricio Co., Texas. *Apalone spinifera*. Herpetological Review. *Submitted*.

Tleimat, J.M., P. Crump, G. Dolby, K. Kusumi, S.F. McCracken. Dynamics of Mycoplasmosis in Texas tortoises (*Gopherus berlandieri*). Journal of Herpetology. *Submitted*.

Brunner, R.M., M.D.M. Moretta-Urdiales, **J.M. Tleimat**, R. Tyler, S. F. McCracken, R. L. Lynch, J.M. Guayasamin, C. Kremen, and D. Rodriguez. Natural history traits are the strongest predictors of pathogen prevalence across working and natural landscapes: implications for amphibian conservation. Proceedings of the Royal Academy B. *In Manuscript*.

Tleimat, J.M., S.R. Fritts, T.B.T. Bowling, R.L. Lynch, D. Rodriguez, S.F. McCracken. 2026. Habitat associations of two threatened primates along a conservation corridor in the Pacific Forest of Ecuador. Biotropica. *Submitted.*

Technical & Grant Reports

Tleimat, J.M., S.F. McCracken. Development of forfeiture and relocation program for the Texas tortoise. Interim Report prepared for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Submitted January 31st, 2026.

Tleimat, J.M., S.F. McCracken, C.Y. Lumibao, G.A. Dolby, K. Kusumi, G. McDaniels. Monitoring diversity of Texas tortoise populations and distribution of their risks. Final Report prepared for the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Submitted October 31st, 2025

McCracken, S.F., J. Tleimat, G. Dolby, G. McDaniels, J. Mellor, K. Kusumi. Conservation genomics and disease ecology of the Texas tortoise, *Gopherus berlandieri.* Final Report prepared for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Submitted January 31st, 2025.

McCracken, S.F., J. Tleimat. Monitoring diversity of Texas tortoise populations and the distribution of their risks. Interim Report prepared for the Texas Comptroller's Office. Submitted September 30th, 2024.

Tleimat, J. Cactus Creek Ranch Bioblitz Reports. Prepared for Cactus Creek Ranch. Five submitted to date (each following the bi-annual bioblitz).

Tleimat, J., S.F. McCracken. A novel approach using camera traps to understand occupancy of the cryptic Texas tortoise. Prepared for Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi Research Enhancement Grant. Submitted March 1st, 2024.

Tleimat, J.M. Monitoring the usage of a conservation corridor by two threatened primate species. Mamont Scholar Grant Report. Prepared for the Explorer's Club. Submitted March 22nd, 2021.

Conference Presentations

Tleimat J., P. Crump, S. F. McCracken. Expect the Unexpected: Lessons From the First Texas Tortoise Repatriation Event. Texas Conservation Symposium. January 16, 2026. Oral Presentation.

Robinson C. D., J. Tleimat, G. M. McDaniels, S. Baty, J. Mellor, P. Crump, S, F. McCracken, G. A. Dolby, K. Kusumi. Lessons from *Gopherus* Genomes: Current Progress Towards Conservation Efforts Using a Genomic Toolkit. Desert Tortoise Council. February 2026. Oral Presentation.

McDaniels G. M., J. Tleimat, S. M. Baty, N. J. Mellor, P. Crump, S. McCracken, K. Kusumi, and G. A. Dolby. Population structure, adaptation, and demography in the Texas tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*). Alabama Academy of Science, Montgomery, AL February 2026. Oral Presentation.

Runyon F., J. Tleimat, J. Muniz, L. Pacheco, C. Lumibao, S. F. McCracken. Shelling Out the Truth: Examining the Microbiome and Diseases of the Texas Tortoise. McNair Scholars Conference. Baylor University. August 8, 2025. Poster Presentation.

Tleimat J., S. F. McCracken. Disease and current research. Texas Tortoise Working Group Meeting. May 7, 2025. Oral Presentation.

F. Runyon, J. Tleimat, J. Muniz, L. Pacheco, C. Lumibao, S. F. McCracken. Comparative analysis of dominant fungal communities on Texas tortoise shells with varying disease status. Symposium for Student Innovation, Research, and Creative Activities - April 25, 2025. Poster Presentation.

Tleimat J., E. Krell, S.F. McCracken. Finding a needle in a haystack: towards the use of machine learning to detect *Gopherus berlandieri* in trail camera data sets. Southwestern Association of Naturalists - April 26, 2025. Oral Presentation

Pacheco L., J. Tleimat, J. Muniz, C. Lumibao, S.F. McCracken. Shell fungal community on Texas tortoises apparently free of fungal disease. Texas Branch of American Society of Microbiology - March 28, 2025. Poster Presentation. 3rd place award.

Kusumi K., J. Mellor, S. Baty, J. Tleimat, G. McDaniels, P. Crump, S.F. McCracken, G. Dolby. A tale of three Gopherus tortoises: Insights from genomic analysis of Sonoran and Mojave desert tortoises (*Gopherus morafkai* and *G. agassizii)* compared with the Texas Tortoise (*G. berlandieri*). Desert Tortoise Council – February 2025. Oral Presentation

Tleimat J., E. Krell, S.F. McCracken. Needle in a haystack: towards the use of machine learning models to detect Texas tortoises in large datasets. Texas Conservation Symposium – January 16, 2025. Oral Presentation

McDaniels D. M., J. Tleimat, S. Baty, P. Crump, S.F. McCracken, K. Kusumi, G. Dolby. Population structure, local adaptation, and demography in the Texas tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*). Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology – January 7, 2025. Poster Presentation.

Pacheco L., J. Tleimat, J. Muniz, C. Lumibao, S.F. McCracken. Shell fungal community on Texas tortoises apparently free of fungal disease. Health Sciences and Technology Research Symposium – October 26, 2024. Poster Presentation

Tleimat J., C. Lumibao, J. Muniz, L. Pacheco, S.F. McCracken. What the shell is going on: Necrotizing Scute Disease in Texas tortoises. Texas Herpetological Society Annual Fall Symposium – October 19, 2024. Oral Presentation

Pellum N., J. Tleimat, S.F. McCracken. Exploring the impact of roads on the movement of tortoises in their habitat. Symposium for Student Innovation, Research, and Creative Activities – April 2024. Poster Presentation.

Tleimat, J., P. Crump, G. Dolby, K. Kusumi, S.F. McCracken. Distribution of *Mycoplasma spp.* across the Texas range of *Gopherus berlandieri.* Desert Tortoise Council – February 2024. Oral Presentation

Johnson, J., J. Mellor, S. Baty, J. Tleimat, P. Crump, S.F. McCracken, G. Dolby, K. Kusumi. Genome sequencing and annotation of the Texas tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*) as a resource for population genetic studies. Desert Tortoise Council – February 2024. Poster Presentation

Tleimat, J., S. F. McCracken. Can transfer learning be used to detect rare species in large datasets? MSGSO 11th Annual Student Research Symposium – October 2023. Short oral presentation.

Tleimat, J., P. Crump, G. Dolby, K. Kusumi, S.F. McCracken. Establishing collaborative networks to increase surveillance of disease in Texas tortoise. Southwestern Association of Naturalists – August 2023. Oral Presentation

Tleimat, J., G. Dolby, P. Crump, K. Kusumi, S.F. McCracken. Texas tortoise task force: Collaborative networks to increase surveillance of disease in tortoises. Desert Tortoise Council Symposium – February 2023. Poster Presentation

Brodsky, C., K. C. B. Weiss, A. M. Green, F. Iannarilli, J. Tleimat, S. Fritts, D. J. Herrera, M. C. Fisher-Reid, J. A. Compton, D. J. R. Lafferty, M. L. Allen. Mammalian functional trait responses to anthropogenic and environmental factors across the contiguous USA. URBIO International Conference – November 2022. Oral Presentation

Tleimat, J., S.F. McCracken. Texas Tortoise Task Force: monitoring disease status in tortoises through a collaborative network. Texas Herpetological Society Annual Fall Symposium – October 2022. Oral Presentation

Tleimat, J., S. Fritts, R. Lynch, D. Rodriguez, S.F. McCracken. Conservation in the canopy: using passive recording devices to investigate habitat associations of two threatened primates. 58th ATBC Meeting – July 2022. Symposia presentation.

Tleimat, J., S. Fritts, R. Lynch, D. Rodriguez, S.F. McCracken. Bioacoustic monitoring reveals an increase in illegal logging within the threatened Pacific Forest of Ecuador during COVID-19 lockdowns. 58th ATBC Meeting – July 2022. Oral presentation.

Tleimat, J., S. F. McCracken. Texas Tortoise Task Force: collaborative networks to increase surveillance of disease in tortoises. MSGSO 10th Annual Student Research Forum – April 2022. Short oral presentation.

Tleimat, J., S. Fritts, R. Lynch, D. Rodriguez, S.F. McCracken. Habitat Associations of Two Threatened Primates along a Conservation Corridor in Western Ecuador. The Wildlife Society Annual Conference – November 2021. Virtual. Oral presentation

Tleimat, J., S. Fritts, R. Lynch, S.F. McCracken. Monitoring dispersal and habitat associations of two threatened primates along a conservation corridor in western Ecuador. Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society – February 2021. Virtual. Poster presentation.

Vasquez M., S. Fritts, J. Tleimat, R. Rylander. Comparing next materials for Black-crested Titmouse in an urban gradient. Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society – February 2021. Virtual. Poster presentation.

Tleimat, J., S. Fritts, S.F. McCracken. Monitoring dispersal and habitat associations of two threatened primates along a conservation corridor in western Ecuador. Texas State Biology Department Colloquium. October 2020. Poster presentation.

Tleimat, J., A. Adam, I. Azhar, A. Mahyudin, S. Fritts. Winners and Losers: Small Mammal Responses to Tropical Land Use Change. Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society. February 2019. Poster presentation.

Tleimat, J., A. Adam, I. Azhar, A. Mahyudin, S. Fritts. Winners and Losers: Small Mammal Responses to Tropical Land Use Change. Texas Society of Mammalogists Annual Meeting. Junction, Texas, USA. February 2019. Poster presentation.

Cuddeback, L., **J. Tleimat**, M. Huston. Post-drought recovery of wildlife populations in the Christmas Mountains. Christmas Mountains Symposium. May 2017. Oral presentation. Co-presented.

Tleimat, J., S. F. McCracken. Effects of Forest Type and Altitude on Beetle Diversity in Ecuador. Undergraduate Honors Presentations Fall 2017. Oral presentation

Invited Panels & Talks

From Research to Management: The Case of the Texas Tortoise
August 28th, 2026. 20th South Texas Wildlife Conference. The Intersection of Wildlife & Livestock Management. Invited by Robert Alcorn and Andrew Earl.

Tortoises and Cactus Creek: a story of conservation and hope!
March 14th, 2026. Invited to give a talk to the current Texas Master Naturalist class in the Rio Grande Valley Chapter at Cactus Creek Ranch.

Biological Sciences Career Panel
February 23rd, 2026. Participated in panel discussion about careers in biology for UTSA class. Invited by Andre Felton.

Conservation Genomics and Disease Ecology of the Texas Tortoise
November 19th, 2025. Wildlife Conservation Webinar Series hosted by TPWD. Presented with Shawn McCracken and Chris Robinson.

Third Annual Student March Madness Coastal Issues Forum
March 3rd, 2025. Invited to present about dissertation research on Texas tortoises at the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation Coastal Issues Forum.

Where research informs conservation action: the case of the Texas tortoise
November 19th, 2024. Presentation given to Endangered Species Practicum course at UTSA about dissertation research and a developing conservation project.

Prepare! Transitioning to Graduate or Professional School Panel
April 23rd, 2024. Participated in panel discussion about transitioning from an undergraduate degree to graduate school.

Trail cameras, Texas tortoises, and BioBlitz at Cactus Creek Ranch
March 3rd, 2024. Presentation given on the trail camera work at Cactus Creek Ranch and report on the CCR BioBlitz as part of the Texas Southfari.

Tortoises, pathogens, and AI: Oh My!
February 10th, 2024. Presentation given at the Winter Wildlife Expo in South Padre Island.

Trail cameras and Texas tortoises at Cactus Creek Ranch
October 11th, 2023. Presentation given on the trail camera work at Cactus Creek Ranch during the Texas Master Naturalist Annual Conference field trip to Cameron County.

International Research – TAMUCC SACNAS
March 29th, 2023. Participated in a panel discussion about international research; how to get involved and common challenges faced.

The tortoise and the pathogen
October 31st, 2022. Talk given in Dr. McCracken's Conservation Biology class.

Eco Experts: Texas Tortoises – Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve
October 20th, 2022. Invited by preserve manager to give a talk about dissertation research on Texas tortoises

MSGSO Get Into Graduate School Week: Ask A Graduate Student Panel
February 28th, 2022. Participated in panel to discuss my experience as a graduate student and about the application process.

Conservation Near & Far – Staten Island State Zoo
November 17th, 2020. Invited by the Education team to give a talk on research in the canopy alongside Ryan Lynch and Dr. Shawn McCracken

Beta Beta Beta – Biology Honor Society at Texas State Graduate Student Panel
October 25th, 2018. Panel to discuss my experiences as a graduate student.

Grants Awarded (Total: $761,125)

State Wildlife Grant 2026 – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Co-PI
$250,000 to continue the repatriation program for confiscated Texas tortoises

Texas Endangered Species Management Program 2026 – Comptroller Office, Co-PI
$125,000 to study dietary habits and movement of wild vs rewilded Texas tortoises

State Wildlife Grant 2024 – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Grant Writer
$250,000 to create a repatriation program for confiscated Texas tortoises

E.E. Williams Research Grant 2023
$1,000 awarded to study potential source of Necrotizing Scute Disease

SSAR Grant in Herpetology 2023
$500 awarded to study potential source of Necrotizing Scute Disease

Texas Endangered Species Management Program 2023 – Comptroller Office, Grant Writer
$125,000 to study potential transmission routes of Necrotizing Scute Disease

The Desert Tortoise Council Morafka Award 2022
$2,500 to conduct research on the Texas tortoise

The Explorer's Club Mamont Scholar Grant 2020
$3,025 to conduct canopy research in Ecuador

Dorothy Coker Research Grant 2019
$1,100 to conduct research on Treeshrews in Borneo

Thesis Support Fellowship 2019
$2,000 to conduct research on Treeshrews in Borneo

Undergraduate Research Foundation 2017
$1,000 to conduct research in Ecuador on Beetle Diversity

Workshop Development

An Introduction into Scientific Writing
Workshop on writing objectives, hypotheses, methods, reviewing literature, introduction/discussion structure, and common mistakes for undergraduate and graduate students. McCracken Lab. April-May 2023.

Workshops Attended

Decision-Science Tools: Bsal Detection Scenario Planning.
Virtual workshop on decision making regarding wildlife diseases. Hosted by Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease (GARD) Conference. June 10th, 2026.

The fieldwork that we envision: A future of equitable field biology and reciprocity with the local communities.
Virtual workshop on considerations for equitably preparing field teams. Hosted by Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. April 17th, 2023.

Communicating conservation science
Workshop on persuasive writing, contacting journalists, creating press releases. Association of Tropical Biology. July 10th, 2022.

A soundscape approach to analyzing big acoustic data
Discussion of acoustic analysis and coding in R to analyze soundscape data Association of Tropical Biology. July 10th, 2022.

Wildlife Camera Trapping
Workshop on data management, occupancy modeling, and spatial analyses. Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources. University of Georgia. March 2022.

Kaleidoscope Pro
Wildlife Acoustics software training. Austin, TX. February 19th, 2020.

GIS: Geocoding & Spatial Statistics
GIS training through Texas State University. April 11th, 2019

GIS: Introduction to Hydrologic Modeling
GIS training through Texas State University. March 7th, 2019

GIS: Introduction to ArcGIS Pro
GIS training through Texas State University. October 18th, 2018

Scholarships Awarded (Total: $77,450)

College of Science Graduate Scholarship - Spring 2025
$1,000 to be applied to tuition

Marine Biology Research Assistantship Competition – Fall 2024
One year of research assistantship salary covered (~$26,400)

Scholarly Achievement in Graduate Education (S.A.G.E.) Fellowship Award in Marine Biology – Spring 2021
Three years of graduate tuition waived at TAMU–CC and summer salary (~$46,200)

The Graduate College Scholarship – Science & Engineering – Winter 2019
$1,000 to be applied to tuition

Lamar & Marilynn Johanson Graduate Endowment in Biology – Winter 2019
$1,000 to be applied to tuition

H.E (Henry) Norris, Jr. Endowed Scholarship – Winter 2019
$1,850 to be applied to tuition for contribution to biological sciences

Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow 2019
Participation in a 5-day intensive program on the role and value of recreational hunting and its application to wildlife conservation

Conference Awards

1st place for graduate oral presentation at the Texas Conservation Symposium – January 2025. Presentation Entitled: Needle in a haystack: towards the use of machine learning models to detect Texas tortoises in large datasets.

1st place for graduate poster presentation at the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society – February 2021. Poster entitled: Monitoring dispersal and habitat associations of two threatened primates along a conservation corridor in western Ecuador.

Mentees

Faith Runyon: January 2025 – August 2025
McNair Scholar trained in sequencing and BLAST analysis in Geneious prime using fungal sequences

Linzee Pacheco: June 2024 – November 204
Undergraduate researcher from Del Mar: trained in molecular techniques (fungal culturing, DNA extractions, DNA quantification, gel electrophoresis, PCR)

Julia Muniz: May 2024 – December 2024
Undergraduate researcher: trained in molecular techniques (fungal culturing, DNA extractions, DNA quantification, gel electrophoresis, PCR)

Natalia Pellum-Mackey: September 2022 – May 2024
McNair Scholar using Texas tortoise camera trap data to investigate whether tortoises are detected at roads more frequently

Iris Fuentes: February 2022 – May 2022
Undergraduate using Wildlife Insights to identify mammals from the canopy of Ecuador

Madison Vasquez: August 2020 – May 2021
Undergraduate researching the impacts of plastic on nesting success and the prevalence of plastic in BCTI nests along an urbanization gradient

Outreach Media

The Great Texas Tortoise Turn-In by Eva Frederick
Interview with Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine about the Texas tortoise repatriation program. April 2026.

Don't Mess with the Texas Tortoise Task Force by Joy Victory
Interview with Texas Monthly about current research with Texas tortoises, with particular focus on research at Cactus Creek Ranch. June 5th, 2024.

https://www.texasmonthly.com/travel/dont-mess-with-the-texas-tortoise-task-force/

A turt-ally unique Uber for tortoises?
Interview with Kris 6 News for World Turtle Day about local research on tortoises. May 23rd, 2024. https://www.kristv.com/news/local-news/in-your-neighborhood/corpus-christi/bay-area/a-turt-ally-unique-uber-for-tortoises

Texas Nature Trackers: Critter of the Month
Interview for a social media feature on Texas tortoises by Texas Nature Trackers to share information on iconic Texas wildlife. September 20th, 2023.
https://www.facebook.com/texasnaturetrackers/posts/pfbid02DGd42hcYuopQTMQmTARCCgBhFaAk3UpkuSBvF93VaBxV1TWFTnwHEB8wdQ4t2xc8l

Tortoise Taxi Fact-line
Maintaining a number that people can text to learn more about tortoises; how to identify them, safely move them across roads, etc., advertised on personal vehicle. 50+ different individuals reached. May 2023-current

Opinion: Time for rattlesnake roundups to celebrate and educate, not slaughter
Corpus Christi Caller Times Op-Ed. April 21st, 2022.
https://www.caller.com/story/opinion/forums/2023/04/21/time-for-rattlesnake-roundups-to-celebrate-and-educate-not-slaughter/70134918007/

Letters to a Pre-Scientist: Instagram Takeover
Shared information about daily life as a wildlife biology Ph.D. student on the LPS Instagram story. October 11th, 2022

Wild Cam: Tracking habitat preferences of imperiled Ecuadorian primates
Interviewed for an article in The Wildlife Society. March 17th, 2022.
https://wildlife.org/wild-cam-tracking-habitat-preferences-of-imperiled-ecuadorian-primates/

Climb Like a Monkey – Canopy Science Saves Forests in Ecuador
Guest blog in Canopy Watch. May 13th, 2021.
https://www.canopywatch.com/climb-like-a-monkey-canopy-science-saves-forests-in-ecuador/

Canopy Adventures with Jackie
Maintained an online blog of field experiences in Ecuador for the purpose of connecting more people with the jungle canopy. December 2019 – January 2021.
https://canopyadventureswithjackie.blogspot.com/

Volunteer & Outreach

Saturdays with a Scientist at the Witte Museum
June 28th & November 29th, 2025
Prepared an activity (find the Texas tortoise) to teach the public about Texas tortoises; how Texas tortoises stay safe in the wild, and how to identify tortoises & terrestrial turtles vs aquatic turtles

Science Thursdays
October 24th, 2024 & January 30th, 2025
Presenting scientific research to a general audience at the Owen R. Hopkins Public Library to connect the community to science happening in their community.

Cactus Creek Ranch BioBlitz
Co-lead a BioBlitz at a south Texas ranch with several participants (ranging from 9-16). Activities included: sweep-netting and utilizing beat sheets for invertebrates, dip-netting for fish, deploying acoustic recorders for birds and mammals, scat and track identification, sieving sediment for invertebrates, deploying minnow traps for newts & fish, spotlighting for mammals, frogs, and fish, ground surveys for insects, arachnids, and plants, using UV and mercury vapor light for nocturnal invertebrates (6 BioBlitzes to date)

Skype a Scientist
Fall 2023-current
Talking with classrooms (3rd – 12th graders) about ecology, what the day-to-day work responsibilities of a scientists are, and my STEM journey (13 sessions to date)

Gulf Reach: Bringing the Deep to Light
Leading an activity about bioluminescence to the general public with a non-profit organization

Letters to a Pre-Scientist
Fall 2022 – current
Exchanging letters with middle schoolers to inform young students about the journey to being a scientist (4 different middle schoolers)

Botanical Gardens – Summer Camp
Led a summer camp segment about turtles and tortoises at the South Texas Botanical Gardens to 6 – 12-year-olds

Beach Clean-Ups
Participation in Adopt-a-Beach and MSGSO led beach clean-ups (12 different beach clean-ups to date)

Christmas Bird Count
Participation in annual Christmas Bird Count in San Marcos, Texas – 2022, 2023 and Rockport, Texas in 2026

Afterschool Science Program
Led lesson on food chains and food webs to 1st-4th graders in San Marcos, TX – Spring 2019

Organization Leadership

Marine Sciences Graduate Student Organization
Secretary Fall 2022- Spring 2024

Duties include recording meeting minutes, planning monthly meetings, social gatherings & reserving spaces, inviting guest speakers, weekly communication with membership, planning an annual symposium (creating judging evaluation forms, moderating symposium sessions, reviewing abstracts, recruiting judges, managing a symposium website, asking for donations)

Organization Membership

Southwestern Association of Naturalists
Member since 2023

Texas Herpetological Society
Member since 2022

The Desert Tortoise Council
Member since 2022

Academic Service

Journal of Emerging Investigators
Reviewer: 2024 – 2025

Stacks
Reviewer: 2026 – current