In late October, Sul Ross Rio Grande Research Center Director Kevin Urbanczyk and staff; Mexico’s Environment and Natural Resources Secretary, Juan Rafael Elvir Quesada; and USDA Secretary of Interior, Ken Salazar celebrated progress toward designating the Big Bend/Rio Bravo del Norte region a “natural area of bi-national interest.”

According to Urbanczyk, “This day reflects our intertwined history, our shared values and mutual hopes for the future. It is a truly unique place in the world to conduct field science.”

“The Cooperative Action for Conservation in the Big Bend/Rio Bravo Region working plan was developed in close coordination with the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, Mexico’s National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and other partner agencies – and implementation has already begun,” he said.

A news release from the U.S. Department of the Interior reads:

“Home to 446 species of birds, 3,600 species of insects, more than 1,500 plants, and 75 species of mammals, the Big Bend region of Texas and the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila provide a unique opportunity for scientists, natural resource managers, and park staff to collaborate in areas that will benefit the people, the landscapes, and the wildlife on both sides of the border.

“Following the announcement, the Secretaries and Ambassador participated in a wildlife release on the U.S. side of the border, demonstrating the results of successful coordination efforts in reaching a common conservation goal. Joined by members of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Salazar, Elvira, and Wayne helped with the transport and release of 267,000 Rio Grande Silvery Minnows as part of an ongoing recovery project for the endangered species. Earlier this month, Mexico released fifteen bird species on the Mexican side of the border in Chihuahua. The species included: two Red-tailed Hawks, two Roadside Hawks, two American Kestrels, one Gray Hawk, two Great Horned Owls, three Burrowing Owls, and three Cooper’s Hawks.”

Photo by Justin Hoffman
Outdoor Learning is Sweeping the University!!---Is it Serendipity or QEP?

SRSU Hosts Texas Academy of Science Meeting

Over 430 professionals and students attended the meeting, held for the first time in the Big Bend region. Dr. Chris Ritzi, associate professor of Biology and interim Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, hosted the meeting. He was elected to serve as the Academy’s Vice President.

SRSU was represented by 16 student presenters and several faculty mentors at the 115th Annual Texas Academy of Science Meeting, held March 1—3 at Sul Ross.

The presentations included anthropology, biology, geology, science education, and mathematics.

“Next year’s meeting will be held in Kerrville at Schreiner University, so we hope to continue to make a strong showing and let the rest of the state remain aware of Sul Ross and it’s contributions to math and science,” said Ritzi.

Sul Ross Hosts Geological Society Meeting

Geoscientists from across the south-central United States convened at SRSU March 5—10, 2012, for the South-Central section meeting of the Geological Society of America.

Technical sessions covered tectonic history of the Trans-Pecos, the Rio Grande, west Texas aquifers, geochronology, petrology, cave processes, minerals and fossils.

Sul Ross faculty, students, and research center directors presented on technical and contemporary topics alongside academic and professional Geological Society peers.

After the meeting, a field trip was conducted of the geology of Colorado Canyon in Big Bend Ranch State Park.

This marks the first time the Geological Society of America has held a meeting in Alpine.

Sul Ross Receives $1 Million for First Endowed Position

With a donation of $1 million, Peggy and Dan Allen Hughes, Jr., have established the first-ever endowed position at SRSU which will benefit Borderlands Research Institute. Both are graduates of Texas A & M.

“Peggy and I are very pleased we are able to make this gift,” Dan Allen said. “The BRI, with the assets of Sul Ross State University, is currently conducting and will continue to conduct much-needed research on the wildlife of the Trans-Pecos Region.”

The Borderlands Research Institute, established in 2007 and located at SRSU, presently manages about 30 student research projects, totaling more than $2 million in grants.

Projects include various wildlife studies (mule deer, quail, desert bighorn sheep, black bear, mountain lion, pronghorn) as well as range restoration and native seed propagation.

Dr. Louis Harveson, BRI director, said, “Dan Allen has been with the Institute since day one and has truly helped us gain a solid footing in our research efforts. This endowment will greatly enhance our ability to educate students, undertake more research projects and increase our focus in various areas of conservation.”
Bonnie Warnock Reports back on Critical Thinking Workshop

Bonnie Warnock, Chair of the Natural Resource Management Department, gave an excellent presentation, “Teaching Critical Thinking: Highlights of the 2012 Critical Thinking Conference.” This QEP-sponsored trip to Berkeley, California, occurred in February 2012. People from all over the world were in attendance. The object of the workshop was to help students learn to transfer critical thinking skills to other areas of life.

One crucial step toward developing critical thinking skills is to add the language of critical thinking to curriculum, and start that early in their education process.

Warnock highlighted several activities to use in teaching critical thinking including: **SEEI:**
S—state the concept
E—elaborate on statement in your own words
E—exemplify...give concrete examples and concrete counter-examples
I—illustrate

Other concepts included: **QAO:** Question/answer/observe

Students form groups of three; assign them a concept that applies to class topic of study. One student asks questions/one student answers/one student observes and writes down a summary of the observation.

**Critical Reading:** Students pair up. One student reads a sentence from the assigned reading and tells what he thinks it means. The other student says what he thinks of the sentence. They then reverse roles. The object is to read and defend the statements.

**Pyramid Activity:** This is a debating process to come to a class consensus regarding an issue or statement. Start with groups of two students. They negotiate a consensus. Then form groups of four which have to come to a consensus. Then form groups of eight, etc. The goal is for the whole class to finally come to the same consensus.

**Learning to Ask Questions:** Put a question on the board at the beginning of class. Teach the lesson. At the end of the class ask students to answer the question that’s on the board.

**Cross Discipline:** Do co-assignments between learning communities. Warnock suggested that some of the activities could be applied to an outside setting. Many of these activities were targeted across disciplines. ...**And More!!!**
Matt Walter, Historian and Curator of Exhibits and Cartographic Collections for the Museum of the Big Bend, gave a presentation to Faculty Seminar entitled “Museum of the Big Bend: A Learning Tool.”

During his presentation, he also suggested some sample questions for getting history students out of the classroom and out into the community:

A) Find this mural, in Alpine, and then tell me about it, and place it within the greater historical context of the time.

B) Find this gun, located in Alpine, and then tell me about it — when was it used, who used it, etc.

Dr. Liz Measures takes math class outside. The class divided into several groups and each group had a list of “things” to measure on campus. The exercise sent them all over campus.

Barney Nelson and student writer, Mary Baird, presented “Indoor Outdoor Learning” describing the Pilot Project completed in the fall of 2011 with a Creative Nonfiction class to Faculty Seminar. The idea was to engage students in research in the Archives of the Big Bend. Students were instructed to pick two research topics from a given list and submit a query letter for each of their two chosen topics to Dallas Baxter, editor of the Cenizo. Baxter visited two class sessions, talked about the publication, encouraged students to submit, and helped critique their ideas. Once the final topic was chosen, they researched it, and then wrote an article with the goal of being published in the Cenizo.

Three students from the class had articles printed in the Winter 2011 Cenizo: Angela Greenroy (“The Desk”), James R. Miller, Jr. (“Woody Guthrie and the Lost Mines of the Big Bend”), and Mary Baird (“Allie Townsend: Texas Ranger”). Students received payment for their articles.

Baird testified that the students were so engaged with the assignment that she was amazed. Nelson plans to do it again.

“A Fun Exercise on Creating Rubrics.” Each member received a blank copy of “A Critical Thinking Rubric” and was asked to list four objectives for an assignment in a class they were currently teaching or planned to teach and list characteristics for Beginning, Developing, Accomplished, or Exemplary performance of each objective. The final product was a possible grading rubric.
SRSU Vocational Nurses Capture NFLVN Critical Thinking Trophy!

Vocational Nursing Program Director, Donna Kuentsler, gave faculty a talk on teaching critical thinking during the initial stages of the QEP. Recently students in her Vocational Nursing Program received the first place trophy in “student skills and simulation” or in other words critical thinking at the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses Association Annual Convention in San Antonio! The competition included schools from a dozen states.

The vocational nursing program prepares students to take the state board examination to become licensed vocational nurses. Approved by the Texas Board of Nursing, the program is administered through the School of Professional Studies.

Comments from students:
The convention was a wonderful experience for us in a number of ways: We had the opportunity to participate in numerous educational programs; learn the role of the LVN in disaster situations; meet LVNs from other schools, states and the military; compete in a practical “skills” scenario and generally gain knowledge and insight into the lives of LVNs from different walks of life.

Four of our fellow classmates; Surrena Rub, Caitlyn Stidham, Leah Brugette and Marisa Villarreal represented the Sul Ross Vocational Nursing Program in a judged, real-life, medical scenario which involved a patient with compromised breathing due to an asthma condition and having inhaled smoke from a firefighting episode. The students were required to assess the patient, make judgments about what treatments and medications to provide and assess the patient afterward for successful outcome. Numerous nursing schools participated in this competition. At the awards banquet, Texas teams took the top 2 spots, with the Sul Ross Vocational Nursing team earning the 1st place trophy!!

We gained knowledge and perspective from LVNs who have been in the profession for decades and heard their stories. We felt very supported by these veteran nurses and inspired by their passion for nursing and the fulfillment that nursing has brought them. This experience affirmed for us that we were indeed, pursuing the right career path.

The NFLPN Conference was invaluable to us as nursing students. We realize that we receive a quality education here at Sul Ross, but this fact was strongly reinforced during this conference. We became closer as a group and also realized that our Vocational Nursing Program is exemplary. We were very proud to represent Sul Ross State University and Texas at this National Convention.

Comments from Instructors:
The scenario was presented to the students through a high-fidelity simulation experience. High-fidelity manikins have computer-integrated physiological features. The use of high-fidelity manikins to simulate real-life scenarios is one of the strategies currently being used in nursing education to emphasize the application and integration of knowledge, skills, and critical thinking. These students are near graduation and their ability to “think on their feet” is essential for competent patient care in the practice environment. They demonstrated their readiness for the real-work world brilliantly.

Monarchs on the Mall

During their fall migration, many hundreds of monarch butterflies took a rest stop on the SRSU campus.

Photos by Jason Hennington and Cheryll Zinsmeyer
Hill Club Takes On River Clean Up
Excerpted from Rachael Barrett (Skyline, Nov. 17, 2011)

A big old time was had by all this fall, when the SRSU Hancock Hill Club made its annual pilgrimage to the Big Bend for the Rio Grande River Clean-Up.

**Day 1:** After a few false starts and return dashes to retrieve some forgotten essential or other, we rolled into camp at Madera Canyon in time to get settled and unpacked by dark with hardly a hitch.

Now there was that one inquiry as to the location of a missing tent (well, they did say to pitch it...), but that was soon remedied. A hearty Dutch oven dinner rounded out the evening, complete with brownies. Yes, brownies! Perk number one of the Hill Club: when we go camping, we eat like kings.

**Day 2, Part 1:** In the chilly dimness before sunrise, we were rousted out of our sleeping bags by Leslie Hopper, aka the Head Camp Wrangler and Chief of Making Sure Everybody Has Fun. One crew, led by Park Ranger Michael Ryan, commandeered the canoes and prepared to set off down-river to scour the banks for trash. The low water levels meant they would end up dragging the boats much of the way.

The second half of our group, including your author, set off in high glee for the river highway. By afternoon we had collected a trailer-load of full garbage bags.

While Michael Ryan and our river crew dined at the Sandbar Cafe, we stopped at Arenosa campground to raid our coolers, then all rendezvoused back at the put-in. All in all the work was a rip-roaring success: we cleaned the highway, and the river crew extracted a rather nasty piece of metal pipe that had gotten stuck in Colorado Canyon during a flood in 2008 (and nobody went for an unexpected swim, either!).

**Day 2, Part 2:** Those who wished could return to camp for a siesta, while those who thought they could handle more punishment (or who won the arm-wrestling contest for a seat in the van) headed off for a hike. Closed Canyon is a deep narrow slot, worn smooth by running water, with a curving path past the sheer, dark rock walls. Eventually we were halted by a pool of water too deep to wade through, and retraced our steps to the mouth.

**Day 3:** No early birds this morning. After a while (no, I am not telling how long) we all made it to the stove for coffee, and then concentrated on working out the stiffness. Here the group would part ways: some out of necessity hitting the road back to Alpine (after all, professors don’t delay assignments just so we can skylark off to the mountains), and some staying to hike again or take out mountain bikes.

Nothing beats spending the weekend in the magnificent Big Bend in company with some of the best folks at Sul Ross.

The Rio Grande Research Center co-sponsored the trip and helped with equipment and transportation.

Sul Ross students, staff and faculty who participated in the River Clean-Up included Pam Gaddis, Leslie Hopper, Kevin Urbanczyk, Estefana Galindo, Rachael Barrett, Julian Wheat, Hunter Krueger, Joshua Perales, Lessi Ruiz, Dennis Avila, Carl Baker, Melanie Blanquiz, Guy Falzarano, and Jessica Lien, SRSU alumnus. Others were David Long, Big Bend Ranch State Park; Charlie Angel, state park volunteer; and Mike Ryan, Big Bend National Park chief ranger.
School of Professional Studies Creates GPS Treasure Hunt!

Students recently had a chance to learn how to use GPS (Global Positioning System) devices to locate six geocaches. Those who found one of the containers then answered a question about recent motivational speaker, Kevin Carroll, to receive a free copy of his book.

Dean Melanie Croy says “ALL of the GEOCACHES (24) hidden to date have been found, including the $20 bill cache for this week! I am very excited to report that today I spoke with our first “SUPER GEOCACHER.” A student came to my office with two geocaches (RED 2 and GREEN 2). She did not have a smart phone app or a GPS, yet she wanted to participate. Using the Internet she found a way to do so. She discovered a way to use the coordinates that were posted and convert them to a point on a map so that she could hunt for the caches without a smart phone app or a GPS. Now that is what I call, ‘Critical thinking!’ Great job!” In all 25 students participated.

Student Government introduced a “Go Green” campaign for November.

The Student Government Association serves to represent the student body of Sul Ross State University, and in order to take a broader approach when it comes to the earth’s environment we will voice our concern for environmental conservation and improvement of the state of the environment at Sul Ross State University. We want Sul Ross to be as green as we can be, we have initiated and implemented a Go Green Month in November. This plan will include each day of the week to concentrate on a different Go Green initiative.

Monday: Save Water Day:
Take shorter showers to reduce water use, and turn off the running water when brushing your teeth.

Tuesday: Save Energy Day:
Set your thermostat a few degrees lower in the winter to save on heating costs, unplug appliances when you’re not using them, and make sure to turn off all lights at your home or dorm before leaving.

Wednesday: Less Tobacco Day:
We ask the Sul Ross Community to refrain from lighting up, chewing, or dipping for one day during each week during the month of November.

Thursday: Save a Tree Day:
Remove yourself from junk mail lists, to limit the flow into your own mailboxes, contact the Direct Marketing Association’s Mail Preference Service at P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512, and try not to waste paper.

Friday: Less Gas Day:
Walk or bike to school or work, and consider telecommuting if you live far from your work.

Throughout the month of November we urge students to recycle daily. At the end of the month, each student who recycles at least one large trash bag of recycled goods will receive a free t-shirt.
Eleazar R. Cano, LPC, presented "Leadership Coaching with Experiential Activities, as seen through the Emotional Intelligence Lens" to the group in February.

Highlight of his talk was a blindfolded activity designed to build trust during which the most "junior" faculty member was instructed to silently assemble the blindfolded dean and senior profs, without giving instructions, and lead them out of the room. A "weak link" was discovered and fixed, with a good time had by all!

Cano explained that Emotional Intelligence describes an ability, capacity, or skills to perceive, assess and manage your own emotions as well as the emotions of others. It is a relatively new area of psychological research.

He also explained how facilitators use actual experiences in a semi-controlled setting to create physiological and psychological reactions to the stimulus being presented. Interpersonal skills, group cohesiveness, and personal growth were among the goals.

He will attend a training session on Emotional Intelligence, partially funded by QEP as a Pilot Project, and present his new information on March 26th. (See right and below!!!)

Cano was joined by Rick Hamlett, from the Emotional Intelligence Training and Research Institute (EITRI) in Corpus Christi, Texas, for another presentation to the faculty-at-large on March 26th after attending training in San Antonio. Prior to the presentation Cano asked various faculty to complete the Emotional Skills Assessment Process (ESAP) online. He then used his own results as an example for study. Rick Hammett, the originator of ESAP, explained the results. Test results show current self-assessment development in the following skill areas: Interpersonal, Leadership, Self management, and Intrapersonal. The objective of the test is to show what areas are strong and what areas need work.

Cano offered to help interpret ESAP results with any staff, faculty, or student who wants to take the test.

For more information he can be reached at the Counseling Center Ferguson Hall 113C 837-8399.
Free Webinars on Outdoor Topics

IT'S EASY!
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If you cannot make the live webinar:
Each webinar is archived and available for viewing on the Texas Wildlife Association website.

QUESTIONS?
Contact Courtney Brittain at cbrbrittain@texas-wildlife.org or 210-826-2904

2012 WEBINARS FROM NOON–1 P.M.

JANUARY 19
Prescribed Burning for Wildlife
Dale Rollins

FEBRUARY 16
Feral Hogs
Billy Higginbotham

MARCH 15
Pond Management
Michael Masser

APRIL 19
Riparian Management 201
Sky Lewey

MAY 17
Integrating Cattle and Wildlife on Small Acreage
Larry Pierce

JUNE 21
Ranch Photography for Fun and Profit
John Martin

JULY 19
West Texas Wildlife Management
Louis Harverson

AUGUST 16
Rainwater Harvesting
Billy Kniffen

SEPTEMBER 20
Deer Nutritional Requirements and Implications for Management
Dave Hewitt

OCTOBER 18
Native Prairie Restoration
Forrest Smith

NOVEMBER 15
Endangered Species Management
Brian Hays

DECEMBER 20
Forestry Management for Wildlife
Chris Comer