



-- Beyond State Borders --

Increasing Student Career Development
Through Experiential Learning & Research

Dr. Shad D. Nelson

Texas A&M University-Kingsville

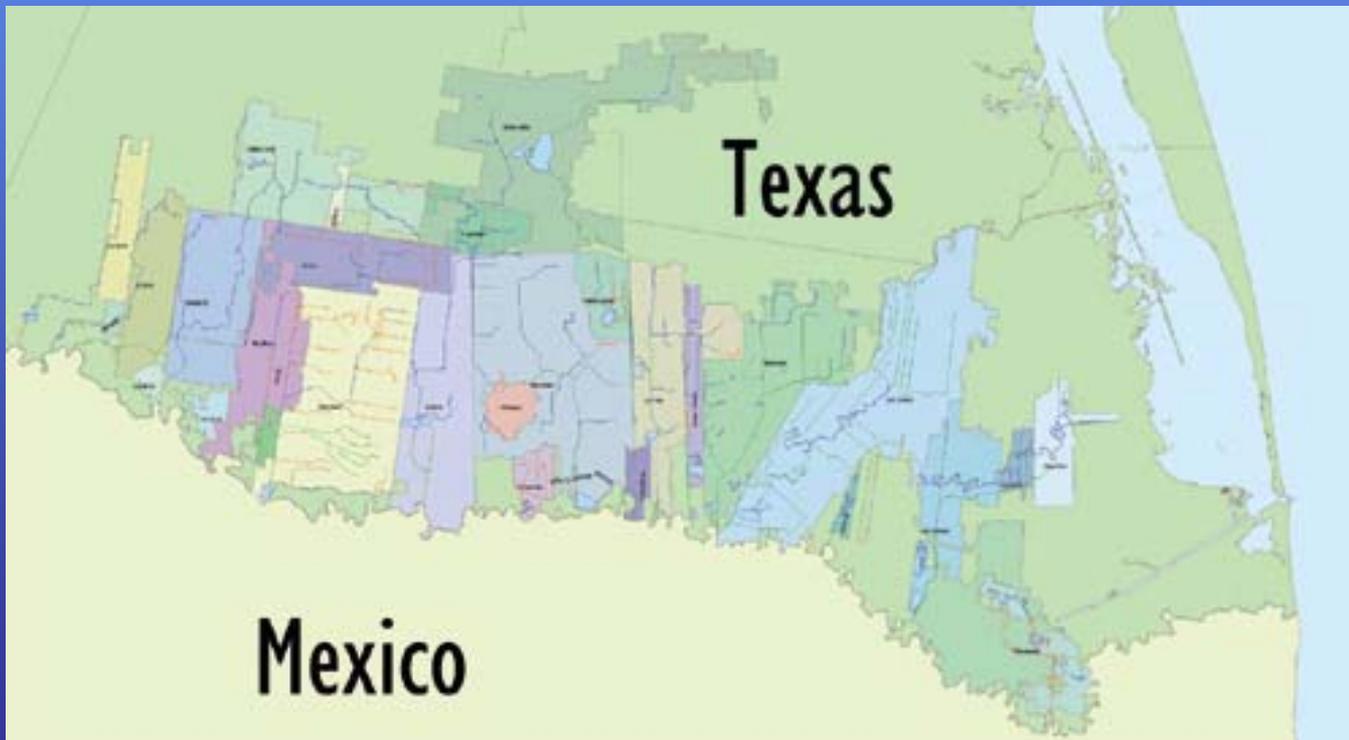
The Major Agricultural University South of College Station

Hispanic Serving Institution (> 50% Hispanic population)

3 Major Research Institutions: TAMUK Citrus Center

Ceaser Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute

King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management



College of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Human Sci. at TAMU-Kingsville has received several USDA/CSREES HSI Hispanic Serving Institution grants

These grants have all aimed at preparing undergraduate and graduate students in the soil, plant, range, animal and wildlife sciences for careers in agricultural related disciplines.

Furthermore, many students are 1st generation college students and most have not been north of San Antonio, Texas (only 2 hours north of Kingsville).

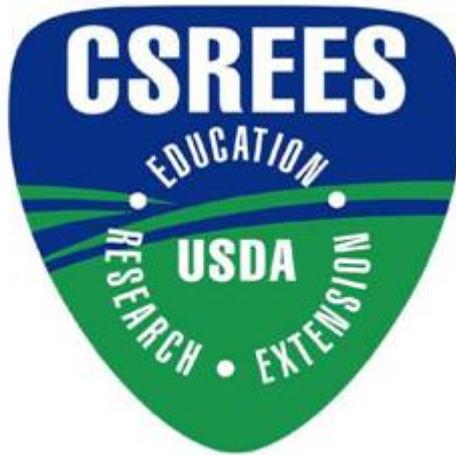
Our challenge is to get these students to be better prepared for careers in State and Federal Agencies, and/or Masters and Doctoral degrees and increase students willingness to take positions outside of Texas.

Some of the unique methods used to prepare our students for jobs in soil, plant, range and wildlife sciences.

Summer Camps aimed at training High School seniors and teachers in biotechnology & getting them in the door into seeing that agriculture sciences is diverse and high tech.

Training Undergraduate & Graduates in Using High Tech Equipment in specialty training courses and afterwards hiring these students to perform research under the direction of a faculty mentor in their area of interest. These students later present research at professional meetings.

Taking students outside the State of Texas and providing them exposure to USDA facilities, other job opportunities, and providing them a vision of what is available if they will only leave their comfort zone of South Texas.



A special presentation of
Range & Wildlife Management students
and a recent adventure into the west.

In May, 2006, TAMUK Range & Wildlife Students were granted an opportunity by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service to learn about land management on public lands in the western U.S., employment opportunities with USDA related agencies, and about GPS/GIS technology. Students were eligible based on character standing and overall GPA.

Words cannot adequately tell of this adventure, but here is an attempt to describe the 3-week journey with pictures and expressions.



Comfortably squished into two vans, students started out by exploring the Trans-Pecos region of west Texas with their hand-held IPAQ's, which allowed them the ability to record features such as GPS locations, photos, and data regarding each site they visited. Many had never been west of the Pecos River.



Ruidoso and Albuquerque, New Mexico

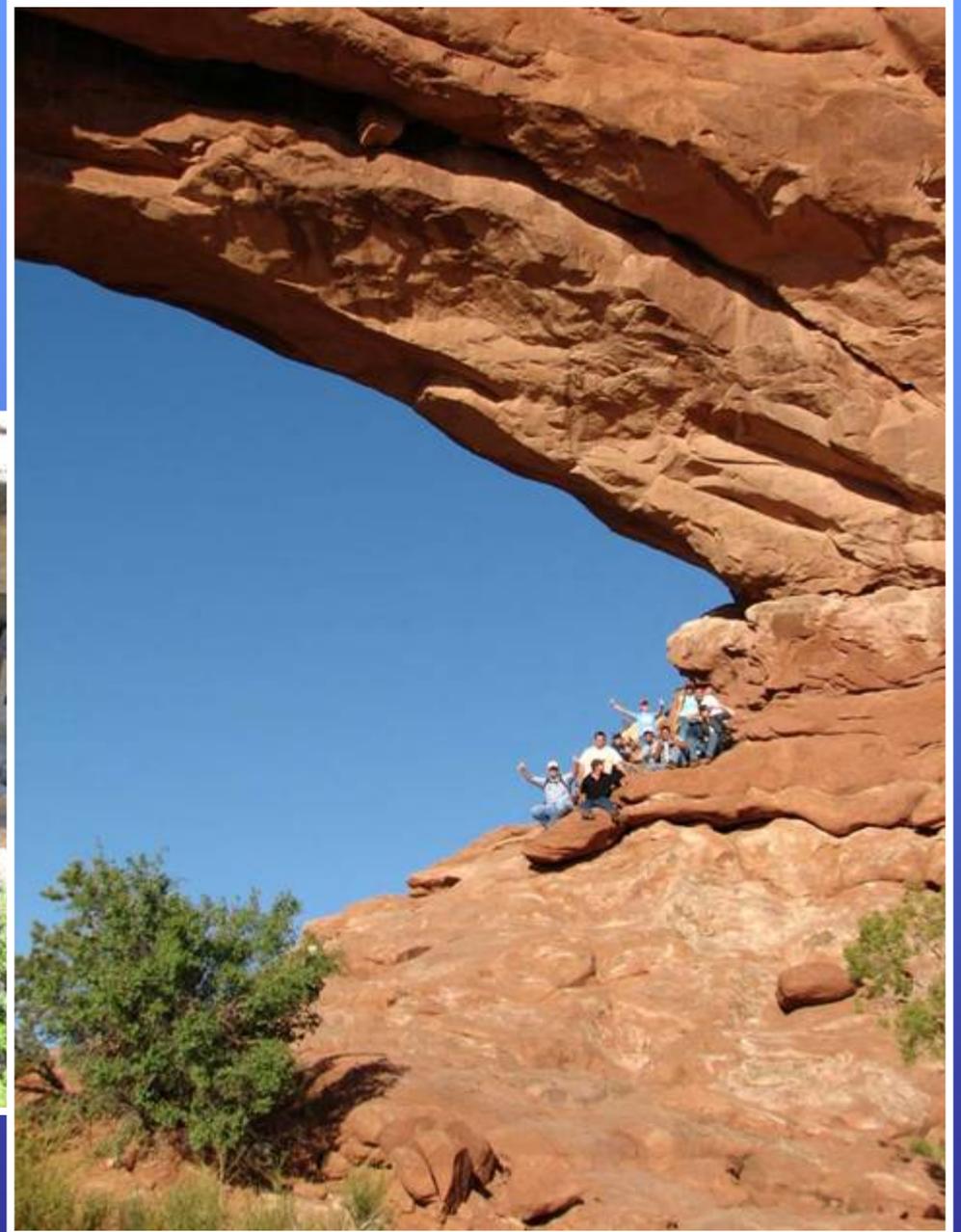
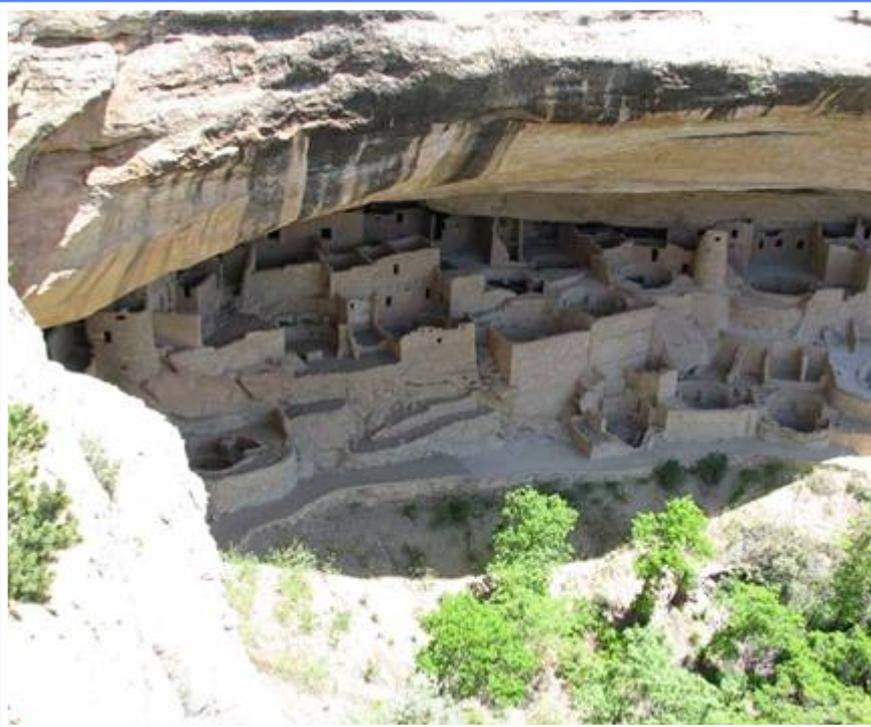
Learn about employment opportunities with the USDA Forest Service, about range conservation, and fire ecology.



They were taught how forest biologists monitor
Spotted Owl populations in old growth forests



Visited
Mesa Verde and
Arches National
Parks



Learned soil ecology and geology from Drs. Shad and Sheldon Nelson in Rocky Mountains and Snake River Valley.



Lava Flow in Idaho

Teton and Yellowstone National Parks



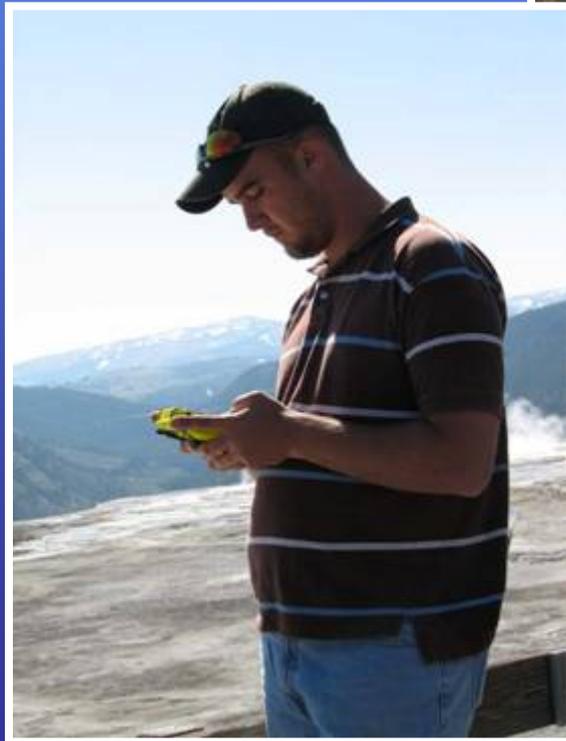
Snow and huge
rivers were a
novelty!



The students were on mental overload with the wildlife, geysers, waterfalls, and snowball fights with their professors!



Students were busy documenting locations on their hand-held IPAQ computers.



Roosevelt Memorial Ranch in Dupuyer, Montana, run by the Boone & Crockett Club

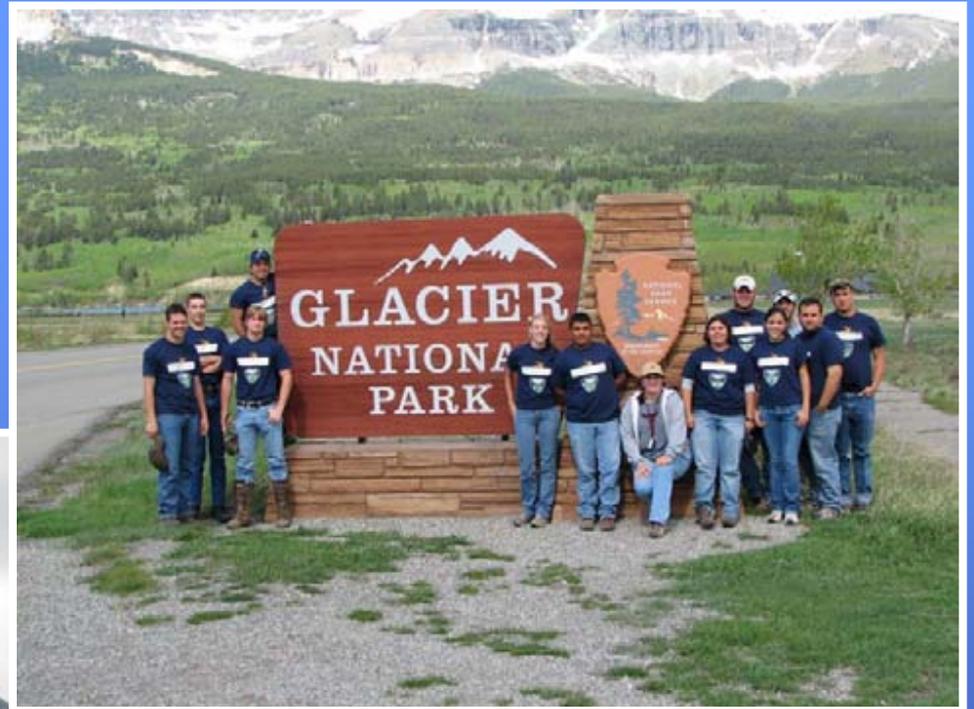


Roosevelt Memorial Ranch in nearby Glacier National Park.



Finally!

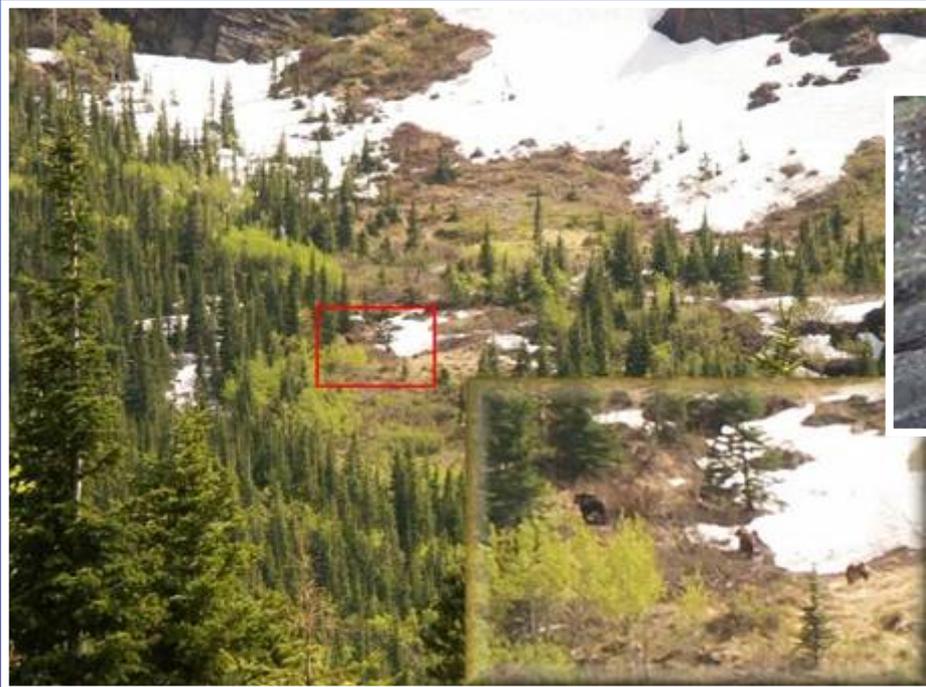
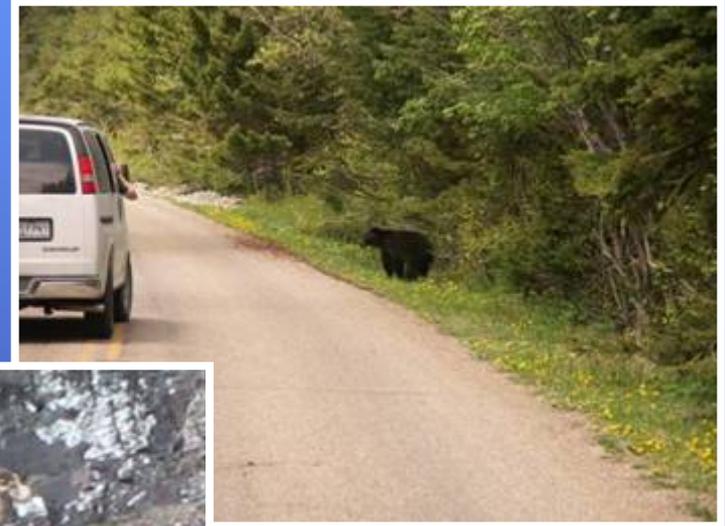
Glacier National Park!



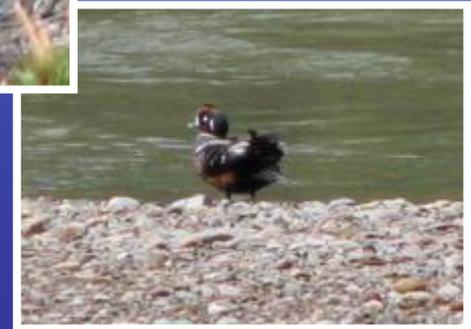
Students saw mountain goats, bighorn sheep, rare bird species, black bears, grizzly bears, and they even saw a wolf catching a rabbit!



Glassing for bighorn sheep and mountain goats in Many Glacier



Grizzly female with 2 yearling cubs – photo by Eric Redeker



Rare Harlequin duck along McDonald Creek

Spent day with US Geological Survey's Glacier Park grizzly bear research team.

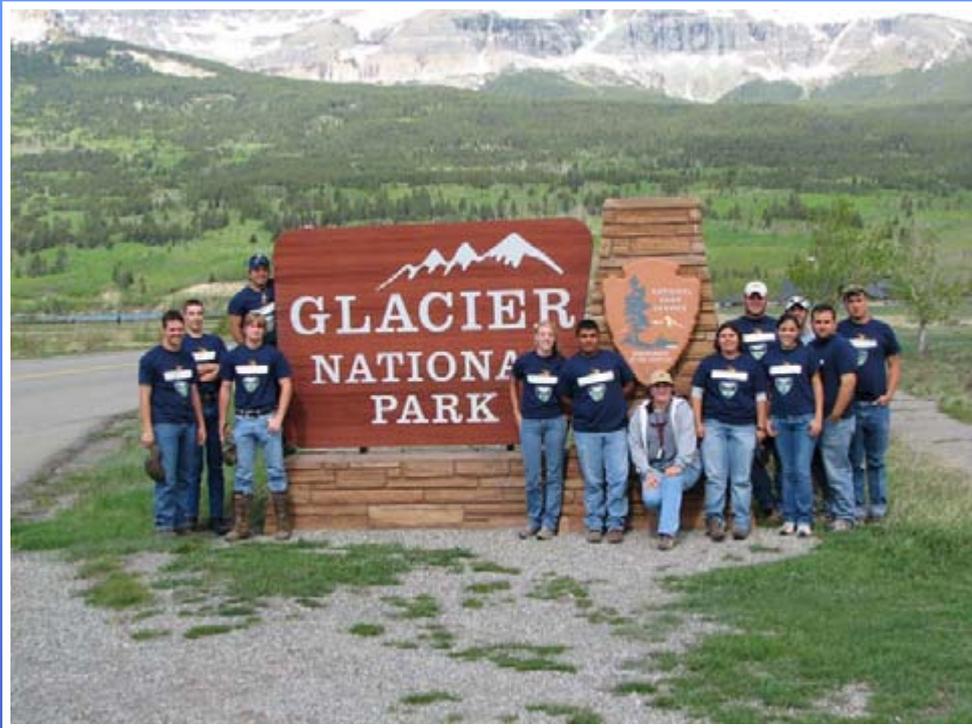


Training in bear safety was a must! Whoa Bear!



The Middle Fork of the Flathead River was running at record levels due to rapid snowmelt!





It was hard to finally leave Glacier, but the trip had to make it's turn back south.



The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls, Montana – Visited a trout hatchery, and the historic buffalo jump at Ulm Pishkun.



USDA-APHIS National Wildlife Research Center in Ft. Collins, Colorado, where students learned about more about internship opportunities.



After traveling 6,600 miles,
(and several days rest) our students are
now making plans for summer internships
outside of Texas

