

B&C UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

The mission of the Boone and Crockett Club University Programs is the development of a diverse community of high-impact wildlife conservation leaders.

MAKING THE PEOPLE/CONSERVATION CONNECTION IN THE WILDLIFE PROFESSION

A RECENT EVENT FOR WILDLIFE STUDENTS AT TEXAS A&M'S BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE HONORED B&C MEMBER JOHN L. MORRIS WHILE PRESENTING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO CONNECT THE DOTS

While most wildlife students go into the profession to manage animals and spend their days in the great outdoors, it can be a hard lesson that the biggest part of their job is managing the expectations and needs of people. Whether it is increasing public support for conservation efforts, managing legal maneuverings to implement habitat restoration projects, or engaging in policy decision-making at the local, state, or national levels—wildlifera have to be well versed in the human side of wildlife management.

One of the Boone and Crockett Club's University Programs is based at Texas A&M University, and Dr. Perry Barboza serves as the Boone and Crockett Chair in Wildlife Conservation and Policy. His career path took him through a period of time working with the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, and the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, before he was recruited to fill the B&C Chair position at A&M in 2015. Through his experiences, he saw the critical need to connect future wildlife conservation professionals with the policy making process that will affect their daily management decisions.

In his role at A&M, Barboza coordinated with the Bush School of Government & Public Service to create a "3+2 program" that takes students through three years of a wildlife degree and adds two years to complete the wildlife degree while also securing a Master's in Public Service and Administration. In addition, he coordinates a one-year conservation capstone project through the Bush School that brings different master's students together to tackle a current conservation policy challenge. While some of the 3+2 students participate in this program, the

capstone is much broader bringing in educators, economists, political scientists and sociologists across the Bush School to work together as a team.

Over the last five years, 60 students have completed a conservation capstone project and many of the students have gone on to secure a position working on conservation issues. One student now does natural resource policy work for the Western Governors' Association. Students enter a broad employment network after completing paid internships in conservation with NGO's such as the Property and Environment Research Center, and government agencies such as the Lands program for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The Bush School is proud to report 90 percent employment of their students within six months of graduation.

"Without too much effort on our part," Barboza says. "These students get a job within the community because they

are trained, they have made professional connections, and they have already started to put the pieces together between conservation issues and the social and policy implications of those challenges."

Barboza says that the Boone and Crockett Club is a catalyst in this effort to create pathways in policy for wildlife professionals. He notes that wildlife agencies need policy people who understand the nuances of the issues—having just a wildlife degree or just a policy degree won't do, they need to understand the complexities of the decisions they will face.

"This type of training is well established in the business world because employers will pay for it and the market supports those salaries," he continues. "However, philanthropy plays a critical role in our wildlife community—you have to be able to underwrite the training to retain the best and brightest. Conservation is public so if you want

At Boone and Crockett Club's 2023 Spring meeting, in conjunction with the Wildlife Management Institute's 88th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, two students from Texas A&M presented their research to Club members. Hunter Parker and Erin Kavanagh's capstone project utilizes a peer-reviewed published framework to evaluate the values individuals assign to wildlife and conservation. They are extending this framework to attempt to understand how individual values impact willingness to contribute financially or participate in conservation programs themselves. LEFT TO RIGHT: Perry Barboza answers questions with his students Hunter Parker and Erin Kavanagh after their presentation.



people to take this pathway it needs to have outside support and much of the current philanthropy in this area is directed toward preservation.”

The B&C program at Texas A&M is making big strides in turning out professionals who are prepared for the complexities of the conservation issues ahead. Continued support by members and the public will help to ensure these students will be the bright future we need in wildlife management.

B&C MEMBER JOHN L. MORRIS RECEIVES MCLANE LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS AWARD FROM TEXAS A&M'S BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE

On March 5, 2024, Boone and Crockett Club Member and Bass Pro Shops Founder John L. Morris received Texas A&M's Bush School of Government & Public Service's prestigious McLane Leadership in Business Award. The award, presented annually by Bush School's

Mosbacher Institute for Trade, Economics, and Public Policy and the George & Barbara Bush Foundation, recognizes a prominent individual for outstanding contributions in the areas of business and public service. The award is designed to promote a sense of corporate citizenship and to reinforce the idea that business plays a key role in maintaining the economic, political, and social vitality of our nation.

Morris, who was a close personal friend of President George H.W. Bush, received the award and participated in a question-and-answer session with junior and senior students in Dr. Perry Barboza's Fish and Wildlife Laws and Administration class. Barboza notes that a big component of the class is making sure the students know they are going into a “people profession not just an animal profession.” The timing of the forum with Morris was perfect as the students were just starting to make that connection.

Barboza moderated the panel asking questions that the students developed as part of the class. Through the conversation the students learned the important positive interaction between business and conservation. They discussed how recruiting people to a conservation ethic starts at a very young age—all, including Morris, reflected on their earliest memories in the natural world and most began at around age six. Because of the tremendous traffic that comes through Bass Pro Shops stores (estimates of over 200 million annually), the stores play an important role in connecting young people in more urbanized areas to hunting, fishing, and conservation.

The event provided an excellent connection between key aspects of the Boone and Crockett Club through member engagement and the University Programs. The future of conservation lies at this crossroads, and Morris' award presented a perfect opportunity to strengthen that connection. ■

John L. Morris (center, front) with Dr. Perry Barboza (far left) and Bush School students and the awards ceremony. Watch the entire presentation online.

