

## **2013 TEEA Winner Individual Category: Mary Jo Bogatto, Owner & Operator Cactus Creek Ranch**

### **Mary Jo Bogatto, Owner & Operator, Cactus Creek Ranch**

I drive through the front gate and I look around, and I go 'Oh, my God, Mary Jo, you own a ranch. Look what you're able to share and experience.' And I still don't believe it everyday. It started 15 years ago; it had been overgrazed by cattle. There was no grass and so we came in with The Nature Conservancy and we planted over 200,000 native plants to preserve it for other generations, and, uh, the only way to do that is to make people love it as much as you do. Good morning, and welcome to Cactus Creek Ranch. I guess you all know Mark Conway; he's famous in the Valley for bird banding. What I know they're taking away from their visit here is a love for nature.

### **Mark Conway, Avian Researcher**

You have to get people on the property and show them things and they get a total view of what can happen. She has some really neat birds that nest here.

### **Mary Jo Bogatto**

I'll also do wildlife photography. Every year, I've been able to document new species that come to the ranch.

### **Stacy Sanchez, Assistant Manager, Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge**

Not just ocelots, but the turkey population here on the ranch has just really increased. The deer population, javelinas...

### **Mary Jo Bogatto**

There's something out there everyday in nature. It's like a scavenger hunt; you have to go out and, uh, look for it, and experience it.

### **Mary Donahue, Mary Jo Bogatto's Mother**

This state of Texas that is so large and so beautiful. Well, if you kind of think of it as a big pair of boots, today, I think there's, uh, a beautiful lady standing in those boots, and it's Mary Jo.

### **Mary Jo Bogatto**

This is not a job. This is my love; this is my passion. I actually saw my dream come true.