

Spencer Jackson Burke

2022 TEEA Winner - Youth



Over the past five years, Spencer Burke has led multiple environmental projects to combat pollinator and natural habitat decline. It started when this Eagle Scout learned that one in four solitary bees face extinction and that solitary bees constitute nearly 90% of the bee population. Spencer led more than 25 volunteers, dedicating over 500 hours, to create and install 100 solitary bee boxes around the DFW Metroplex area. Each of these boxes was secured to trees using knotted rope to prevent damage to the trees themselves.

Spencer also incubated and hatched more than 1,000 Northern bobwhite quail eggs in order to increase genetic diversity among existing quail coveys and to release new coveys. He worked with Mr. Bob Mione, a Texas Master Naturalist, to brood, hatch, and raise the quail in pens at his home, later releasing them in the Connemara Conservancy as well as the Oak Point Nature Preserve in Plano.

Spencer has led several projects to remove and replace non-native and invasive species of plants from local parks and trails. At the Twelve Hills Nature Center, he and his 30 volunteers worked for 300 hours to remove 45 contractor bags of non-native grasses. These areas were then replanted with native grasses and wildflowers using an innovative new planting method called interseeding. At the Northhaven Trail, he assembled and dispersed over 1,000 seed balls to create new wildflower areas.

As a high school student, Spencer knew he could not "save the world," but he still felt a responsibility to do his part to help make a difference locally. In doing so, he has become a leader and inspiration to his community.