

## **Eastern Conservation Science Team Member Profile:**



### **Analie Barnett**

**Landscape Ecologist  
Eastern Conservation Science  
Atlanta, GA**

#### **When you were little, what did you want to be?**

I grew up on a cattle ranch and hog farm in North Texas. From an early age, I was always helping my dad with everything from driving a combine to delivering baby pigs. What I enjoyed most was helping take care of our animals, and when not helping on the farm, writing short stories. Thus, my earliest career aspirations were to be a veterinarian and a writer. The problem with the vet track was my tendency to become very attached to animals. A couple of experiences at the vet's office during my youth made me rethink becoming a vet. In cleaning out the closet in my childhood room, my mom recently found the diary I kept when I was young. We were laughing so hard because every single entry is a heartfelt condolence to a pet, farm, or wild animal that died. The diary is both hilarious and clear that I made the right decision to pursue other interests. I still have dreams of being a writer living in Paris, but that might be later down the road...



*Analie's dad (Skip) examining cropland converted to improved pasture grasses (Alamo Switchgrass) on the ranch where she grew up. Skip was recently awarded Outstanding Conservation Rancher of the Year in North Texas.*

#### **Why did you choose your profession?**

This is a long story that I will try to condense. In college I double majored in economics and literature. My first job was working in investment banking, in the oil and gas sector; a field I did not particularly enjoy. After about two years, I decided to put my English degree to use and worked in academic publishing first as an assistant editor, then associate, and ultimately development editor for college textbooks in Sociology and Anthropology. A publishing job brought me to San Francisco, California. Growing up, I had spent most of my time outdoors and had always loved the environment and all the animals who depend on it, but I wasn't aware of many environmental career opportunities. In San

Francisco, I started volunteering for environmental groups and learned more about careers in conservation and environmental science. Around the same time, the large ranch across from my family's land sold and was subdivided into ranchettes. I remember coming home for a visit from California and being struck by the fragility and vulnerability of the land that I had grown up loving. Our family decided to put most of our land in conservation easements with a local land trust and the NRCS Grassland Reserve Program to maintain the land as a working cattle ranch. Through these experiences, my interest in conservation planning was formed. I found several graduate programs that were of interest, and I started taking science courses at a local college in the Bay Area to obtain all the prerequisites I was missing. I ultimately decided to go to Duke University due to their geospatial program, a scholarship, and my significant other (Mike) had his sights on pharmacy school at the University of North Carolina, right down the road from Duke. At Duke I discovered I loved both spatial and statistical analysis, and how they could be used together to improve conservation planning and natural resource management. Mike did end up at the University of North Carolina and we cannot peacefully watch a Duke-UNC basketball game together. Go Blue Devils!

**What's one project that you're working on right now?**

I am working on a project to identify coastal marshes in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico that we hypothesize will be more resilient to sea level rise based on the configuration and condition of their migration space, which refers to the adjacent lowlands that provide space for tidal habitats to migrate landward as sea levels increase. Specifically, I am evaluating thousands of coastal sites in the project area for the size, configuration, and tidal diversity of their migration space, as well as the key processes necessary to support the migration of coastal habitats. Each site will ultimately receive a resilience "score" based on the likelihood that its coastal habitats can migrate to adjacent lowlands under different sea level rise scenarios. This work is funded by NOAA's Coastal and Ocean Climate Applications (COCA) program, the Donnelley Foundation, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and is expected to be complete by 2019. We have a fantastic and highly engaged steering committee for this project, comprised of staff from TNC chapters and state and federal agencies, whose input has greatly improved and advanced this work.

**What was an accomplishment from last year that you're proud of?**

I was an athlete in high school and college and have always been physically active, until my son was born three years ago. As a new mom trying and failing to do everything perfectly, I did not take care of me. Starting last January, I decided to make time to exercise regularly and perhaps more importantly, to not feel guilty about it. A year later, I am very proud of myself for sticking to it, and I am a much happier and healthier person for it.



*Finch, Mike, and Analie*

**How do you spend your free time?**

Chasing after my three-year-old son, Finch! I love spending my weekends hiking with my family. Mike and I also love to travel, and we look forward to sharing that more with Finch as he gets older. When I get some free time, I enjoy reading, and thinking about writing my first book. My favorite book I read last year was "Educated" by Tara Westover. It was a fascinating story with an interesting perspective on education that made me appreciate both the formal and informal educational opportunities I had growing up.

**What is your favorite place to hike?**

While we love to explore new areas around Atlanta and in the north Georgia mountains, my son is currently obsessed with hiking at Stone Mountain, a large quartz dome just outside of Atlanta, so we have been spending a lot of time there lately. We like to hike to the top of the mountain, but we also enjoy the forest trails at the base of the mountain, which have the bonus of glimpsing the scenic railroad train (a major highlight for my son).

**What is one of your favorite things about Winter?**

I have a very low tolerance for cold temperatures, and I know my definition of cold is laughable to you and my other Boston colleagues. I do love the holidays and how life seems to slow down just a little bit when it is really cold outside; but even more, I love that buildings are warm when you enter them. It is the only time of the year that I am more comfortable inside rather than outside.



*Mike and Finch taking a break along the Songbird Habitat Trail at Stone Mountain.*

*Interview conducted by Melissa Clark, January 2019.*