



# The Uvalde Leader-News

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## GeoFORCE Texas students explore Uvalde-area's geology

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**Young scientists explored some of the rich geology in Uvalde County on July 11 and 12 as participants in a two-day field study that was part of the GeoFORCE Texas Program.**

Sponsored by Southwest Texas Junior College and The University of Texas at Austin's Jackson School of Geosciences, with corporate support from ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil Foundation, Shell Oil Company, the SBC Foundation and Priority Oil and Gas, the new program is aimed at recruiting prospective geoscientists from among top Southwest Texas math and science students.

"The purpose of the field study in Uvalde County was to demonstrate to students how interesting geology can be and hopefully spark an interest that will carry them on to a future study of the geosciences," said Doug Ratcliff, associate director of the Jackson School.

A total of 24 area students who will be entering the ninth grade this fall took part in the two-day event hosted by SWTJC and the Jackson School.



*LOOK, UP IN THE SKY! - A visit to the Bat Cave on the Annandale Ranch near Concan was part of a two-day field study in Uvalde County on July 12 and 13. The field study was sponsored by GeoFORCE Texas a new program aimed at recruiting students into geoscience fields. (Photo courtesy of SWTJC)*

The students represented eight Southwest Texas communities including Brackettville, Cotulla, Crystal City, Del Rio, Dilley, Eagle Pass, Rocksprings and Uvalde.

Program participants from Uvalde were Kimberly Albarado, Jamie Hawkins-Kirkham, Samantha Perez and Ricardo Rodriguez.

On the first day of the field study, students learned from Sigrid Clift, geologist for the Jackson School's Bureau of Economic Geology, that Uvalde was in a province of volcanic activity about 80 million years ago.

Visiting a site of the Frio River just off Garner Field Road, students were able to stand where there was once a volcanic crater.

At this same location, students observed where volcanic ash had been converted, over time, to rock.

First day activities also included a trip to the Vulcan Materials rock quarry in Knippa.

There students were given a tour of the quarry by assistant plant manager Mike Shutter and were able to collect basalt samples.

On their way back to Uvalde, students also collected samples of a Del Rio formation alongside one of the area farm-to-market roads just outside the city.

Lunch was served at the Uvalde Historical Commission's Fort Inge Park where students sat along the Leona River while Clift discussed river ecology and the Edwards Aquifer.

They also learned that Mount Inge is composed of remnants from an extinct volcano.

Later in the day, John Andrews, also with the Jackson School's Bureau of Economic Geology, gave a virtual tour of the Edwards Aquifer and the Big Bend National Park to the group and Clift presented a simulation on the importance of water conservation and pollution awareness.

After dinner, students were taken to the Annandale Ranch to watch the nightly exodus of more than a million Mexican free-tail bats from a large cave along the Frio River.

The first event of day two was a visit to the Vulcan Materials Uvalde Plant located off Highway 90 west of Uvalde.

Chuck Bevis, Vulcan plant manager, gave an overview of the plant's operations and then took students on a tour of the quarry.

Students examined and collected fossils embedded in the limestone material used to make rock asphalt.

Following the trip to the Vulcan plant, an examination of the upper Nueces River canyon and an overview of the two-day field study was made at Big Oak River Camp on Highway 55 near Lake Nueces County Park.

Students then had lunch and swam in the Nueces River.

A closing session was held on the SWTJC Uvalde campus in the college's Tate Auditorium. Program participants received a certificate of completion, along with a rock kit.

"This was a wonderful group of students to work with and I know they went home with an increased awareness of the area's geology," said GeoFORCE Texas Program Coordinator Julie Spink.

Spink thanked area teachers Wanda Demboske of Uvalde High School, Brett White of Hondo Junior High and Kathryn Dowlearn of the Leakey Independent School District for helping chaperone and teach the young geoscientists.

SWTJC's Whipple also thanked college staff members Julie Garcia, Nita Reed, Suzanne McCormack, Eva Gonzalez and Anna-Marie Darden for assisting with the event.

"Thanks to everyone involved I believe we put on an event that will inspire and motivate these students to actively consider geology as a future course of study," Whipple said.