

Ed Boles, Ph. D. Aquatic Ecologist Biography

Born in Mississippi and raised on the Gulf Coast and at a small cattle farm in the central part of the state, I became interested in natural sciences from an early age. I worked my way through high school and college (Hinds Community College, University of Southern Mississippi, University of West Florida, Jackson State University) as a farm hand, janitor, grocery clerk, shipping company package handler and car shifter, electrician's assistant, oyster shucker, dishwasher, carpet cleaner, carpenter, animal room technician, river-boat deck hand, truck scale overhauler, substitute teacher, and commercial artist. Meanwhile I pursued degrees in biology and environmental science with an emphasis in aquatic ecology. Today I usually spend a lot of time doing what I have been doing since I was about five years old—investigating streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, swamps, marshes, and coastal zones.

Professionally I have worked in the United States as a field biologist (cooperative education student program) with the US Army Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station (Vicksburg, Mississippi), Hinds Community College and University of Belize as a faculty member, the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington D.C. as an intern, and the Mississippi State Department of Health as the Entomologist Senior and State Shellfish Survey Officer. In 2012 I was invited to New Mexico State University as the Gerald Thomas Chair, and then worked on a two-year contract as a coordinator with the NMSU Faculty-Led International Program under the International and Border Programs.

My wife, Blanche, my son, Reeve, and I moved to Belize in 1988. We built and ran an environmental field station in the Mountain Pine Ridge on the northern face of the Maya Mountain Massive, in Belize for a couple of years. For the past twenty-three years I have also worked as an environmental consultant in Belize (Belize Center for Environmental Studies, Belize Audubon Society, Belize Electric Company, Belize Department of the Environment, United Nations Development Programme, The Nature Conservancy, University of Belize, CATIE), Institute for Sustainable International Studies and taught faculty-led field courses for university groups from Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

One of my main professional focuses in life is to help re-unite nature and societies to create ecologically sustainable and resilient systems, giving us the capacity to endure and adapt to the global changes within our immediate future. Specifically for me that involves protecting the riparian forests, those vital stream and riverside forests that serve as the primary filter systems of the landscape, control erosion, capture and recycle nutrients, feed the streams and rivers, provide wildlife with corridors and dry season food sources, and many other functions. I work with many others to promote riparian forest protection and restoration through community based, youth-focused, farmer-involved integrated watershed management strategies that benefit stakeholders and the environment.

As for my passions and preoccupations, I continue to be amazed by living things and the spirit of life. Currently I am learning about the deep history of the United States and the world, geology of New Mexico and Belize, riparian conservation and management, and coastal zone ecology, and rapid ecological assessment methodology. I also devote a lot of time to writing, a particular passion that sometimes keeps me up late at night and pulls me out of bed long before the sun appears.