



# Desert Tracks

"Helping conserve the natural resources of the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands through research, education, & outreach."

Spring/Summer 2008

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Editor: Patricia Moody Harveson

## RESEARCH IN ACTION:

### *Assessing Pronghorn Movements Using Genetic Techniques*

by Renee Keleher and Louis A. Harveson

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Over 150 landowners and hunters from west Texas recently participated in the first year of the study. Partnering with landowners, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and Texas A&M University-Kingsville, researchers with the Borderlands Research Institute (BRI) are investigating the effects of barriers on pronghorn movements.

Unlike deer, pronghorns are reluctant to jump over fences. Their inability to maneuver through fences and highways makes them especially susceptible to fragmentation and isolation, which may result in inbreeding and population declines.

This project will allow researchers to determine if highways, net-wire fencing, or other natural or man-made features might serve as barriers to pronghorn. With these results, we hope to improve management strategies for pronghorns in the Trans-Pecos.

Last year when TPWD mailed the 2007 pronghorn permits they included a letter from the BRI requesting that landowners and hunters provide a tissue sample (small piece of tongue) and fill out data card from harvested pronghorn in the Trans-Pecos.

We received an overwhelming response to the request. Of the 819 permits issued in 2007 for the Trans-Pecos, 412 permits were utilized (~50%). We received 165 tissue samples representing 31 herd units. We are very appreciative of those who participated and we hope they will continue to assist us



Historically, pronghorn herds moved over large distances in search of food, water, and cover.

with this project and provide tissue samples during the 2008 fall season.

With nearly 70% of the Texas pronghorn population residing in the Trans-Pecos, pronghorn are certainly an important component of the west Texas landscape. Joint efforts by west Texas landowners and TPWD have helped bring the pronghorn population from near endangered in the early 1900s to a statewide population of over 18,000 in the early 1990s.

We still need your help! Working with TPWD, we will be sending a letter requesting assistance along with the 2008 pronghorn permits. Please consider helping us by participating in this study.

For more information contact Renee Keleher (research assistant) or Louis Harveson (project leader) at 432.837.8488.

#### PRONGHORN EQIP 2007: AN OVERVIEW

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) awarded >\$800,000 to west Texas producers.

Projects are designed to provide technical and financial assistance to implement practices that will restore and maintain pronghorn habitat.

Eligible practices included:

- Brush Management
- Fencing
- Contour Ripping and Seeding
- Fireguards
- Wildlife Watering Facilities
- Pipelines

For more information contact your local NRCS office.

## About the Borderlands Research Institute

### Borderlands Research Institute Advisory Board

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The Chihuahuan Desert is experiencing unprecedented pressures on its natural resources. Population growth, habitat fragmentation, and invasive species combined with frequent droughts make conservation and management of the natural resources especially challenging. As the least populated region in Texas, the Trans-Pecos is also one of the least understood regions of the state. Relatively few studies have been conducted on the unique flora and fauna of the region. This lack of information ultimately handicaps landowners and land managers who are trying to manage their wildlife and rangeland resources.

Understanding the need for information and the value of natural resource conservation, Sul Ross State Uni-



Advisory Board members (l-r): Armando Garcia, Hiram Sibley, Bonnie McKinney, Elliott Hayne, Valer Austin, Homer Mills, Robie Golden, and Allen Smith.

versity created the Borderlands Research Institute for Natural Resource Management in spring 2007. The goal of the Borderlands Research Institute is to provide land managers with the most current scientific information on the management of the area's natural resources. To meet this goal, the Institute plans and conducts research investigations on various aspects of the natural world and pro-

vides the results to land managers so that they may better manage the resources they are entrusted with. The Institute is a natural expansion of a long-lasting partnership between private landowners of west Texas and the Range and Wildlife Program at Sul Ross State University; as well as cooperating state, federal, and non-government organizations. Please contact us for more information.

## Harveson Receives Teaching Award, Elected VP

Twenty-eight SRSU students and faculty attended the 43rd Annual Conference of the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society in San Antonio. Wildlife students delivered 5 presentations on jaguar in Paraguay, urban mule deer, elk habitat use, movements

of trophy mule deer, and fidelity of translocated deer.

Dr. Louis Harveson, associate professor of wildlife management also won the Educator of the Year Award given to the top wildlife educator in the state. The award marks his 10th year

leading the wildlife program at SRSU. Harveson was also elected as the new Vice-President of the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society which includes a 4-year commitment of service (Vice-President, President-Elect, President, and Past-President).



Dr. Louis Harveson (left) receiving award from TCTWS President, Dr. Fidel Hernandez.

## Donor Spotlight: Hayne and Kelleher

Jim and Roxie Hayne and Herb and Joan Kelleher recently donated \$25,000 via the Roxana G. Catto Advised Fund of the San Antonio Area Foundation to the Borderlands Research Institute.

The Kellehers and Haynes, along with their families, are owners of the historic Catto-Gage Ranch which is located in the Marathon to Marfa area. Joan and Roxie's grandfather, Alfred S. Gage, began his cattle

business in the late 1880s. The Catto-Gage Ranch has been a leader in conservation and received the Lone Star Land Steward Award for the Trans-Pecos Region in 2007.



Joan Kelleber (left) and Roxie Hayne (right) of the Catto-Gage Ranch.

## Conservation Organizations Help Launch BRI

Wildlife organizations across the state pledged between \$1,000 to \$5,000 to help launch the Borderlands Research Institute for Natural Resource Management. Donations will be used to print and mail the first issue of the Research Highlights to thousands of landowners, land managers, conservationists, and wildlife enthusiasts throughout the Chihuahuan Desert region.

The Research Highlights profiles >90 research and management projects conducted by faculty in the Range and Wildlife Program during the last 10 years. Sponsors for the Research Highlights included the Houston Safari Club, Texas Bighorn Society, Texas Wildlife Association Foundation, Dallas Ecological Foundation, West Texas Chapter of Safari Club International, and the Texas

Wildlife Association. Sul Ross State University has been partnering with these outstanding organizations for over a decade on various outreach, education, and research projects.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Research Highlights, please contact Louis Harveson, Director of the Borderlands Research Institute at 432.837.8488 or [harveson@sulross.edu](mailto:harveson@sulross.edu).

**Please consider making a tax deductible donation to the Borderlands Research Institute to support our research, outreach, and educational programs.**

## SRSU Wildlife Club Wins National Award

Fifteen SRSU students travelled with pride to Tucson, Arizona this past fall to attend the 14th Annual Meeting of The Wildlife Society and receive the national award for Outstanding Student Chapter of the Year Award.

The SRSU Range and Wildlife Club is 1 of 102 student

chapters across the nation. Criteria for the award included community service, conservation projects, and outreach activities. "This is equivalent to winning the BCS Championship in college football or the Sweet Sixteen in college basketball" said Abel Guevara, President of the Club. "Past recipients have included

huge universities like Colorado State, Texas A&M, and Wisconsin-Stevens Point. This is a testament to the quality of the Range and Wildlife Management program at Sul Ross. Although one of the smallest programs in the country, we can compete with the best of them!"



Wildlife Club members at the 14th Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society in Tucson, Arizona.

## *BRI to Host Wildlife Conference, August 14-15*



*Join us August 14-15 for the Trans-Pecos Wildlife Conference for the latest information on wildlife research and management.*

**M**ark your calendars for the Trans-Pecos Wildlife Conference 2008. The Borderlands Research Institute for Natural Resource Management (BRI) is partnering with the Texas Wildlife Association (TWA) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to host the conference at Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, August 14-15, 2008.

Conference seminars include a keynote address by TPWD Executive Director,

Carter Smith, with subsequent talks on scaled quail, feral hogs, elk, and ending with a half-day of presentations focusing on mule deer management in west Texas. Additionally, on Friday, August 15 we have scheduled a half-day field trip with demonstrations at the historic Catto-Gage Ranch to highlight some of their range and wildlife management practices. Also on tap for day two: see wildlife-livestock interactions up-close with comparative anatomy necropsies (dissections)

of a heifer vs. a cow elk, an aoudad vs. a mule deer, a rumen content analysis, and a local plant tour.

TWA, Natural Resource Conservation Service, TPWD, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, BRI personnel, private landowners, and veterinarians will be on hand to assist with field tours and necropsies, discuss wildlife inventory and monitoring procedures, discuss the how-to's of marketing wildlife, and field questions from attendees.



**Sul Ross State University**  
A Member of the Texas State University System.  
Alpine, Texas

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for Natural Resource Management*

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