Jose Etchart, M.S. Thesis Candidate

My name is Jose Luis Etchart. I was born and raised in the sun city of El Paso, TX. Coming from a ranching family down in Chihuahua, Mexico at a young age I began to love the outdoors working cattle and riding horses. I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science concentrating in Reproductive Physiology from Sul Ross State University. Freshman year of college I was introduced into the wildlife field and acquired a passion for the career. I worked for the Borderlands Research Institute as a wildlife technician primarily with scaled quail, Gambel's quail, bighorn sheep, and white tailed deer projects. I worked for Texas Parks and Wildlife as a bighorn sheep technician monitoring translocated bighorn in the Sierra Vieja Mountains, Texas. After experiencing in some ways the life of the bighorn sheep this particular species has become my passion. I am currently pursuing a Master of Science degree in Wildlife Management here at Sul Ross State University through the Borderlands Research Institute under Dr. Ryan O'Shaughnessy.

Thesis Project: Evaluating Sympatric Relationships between Desert Bighorn Sheep and Aoudad

As our restoration efforts of desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis spp.*) continue, anecdotal reports from agency staff, biologists, hunters, and landowners suggest that the desert bighorn is potentially most threatened by the distribution and population increase of aoudad or barbary sheep (*Ammotragus lervia*). Aoudad, an African genralist is originally from the Atlas Mountains in northern Africa were brought in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. Due to their apparent ease of adaptability there is considerable concern for serious ecological competition with endemic fauna, and modification of local flora. The effect of aoudad on native ungulates species such as bighorn sheep is yet unknown. Presently, in the Sierra Viejas Mountains, Texas there are 25 GPS collared bighorn sheep that have been monitored for the past 2 years. The collars are programmed to collect GPS locations every 3-5 hours. In order to evaluate the relationships between aoudad and bighorn, 12 aoudad were captured and collared with programmed GPS collars (programmed the same as bighorn) in the Sierra Viejas Mountain Range, Texas in September 8-9, 2015. By having these two species collared it will allow us to analyze movements, range sizes, interactions between herds, and habitat utilization. Another part of the project is to look at diets and water utilization of the two species and determine level of competition between them.