

Katie Sauer, M.S. Thesis Candidate



My Name is Katie Sauer and I am from Littleton, Colorado. My interest in Ecology and the outdoors was sparked while studying abroad at Lincoln University in New Zealand. The country's fragile ecosystem brought to my attention how important conservation is if we want to preserve the natural beauty in the world. After graduating from Colorado State University in 2010, I moved to New Mexico where I worked on a number of different projects ranging from drought tolerance of Pinion and Juniper trees to invasive species management. Working with US Fish & Wildlife in New Mexico inspired me to pursue my Master's Degree in Natural Resource Management under Dr. O'Shaughnessy and Dr. Luna.

Thesis Project: Using Quail and Grassland Birds as Indicators of Chihuahuan Desert Grassland Ecosystem Health

Grassland deterioration due to over-grazing and shrub encroachment plays a major role in the decline of overall ecosystem health in the Chihuahuan Desert. This study seeks to quantify grassland health based on the presence or absence of 12 indicator bird species (3 species of quail and 9 species of songbird). We will be conducting our research on ranchlands throughout the Trans-Pecos Region of Texas, each with a varying amount of livestock-induced impact. Abundance of the target birds will be determined using flush counts along line transect surveys and will then be compared to the estimated availability of forage (seeds and invertebrates) in the area.

