

Skyler Stevens, M.S. Thesis Candidate



My name is Sky Stevens, and I am from Midland, Texas. I grew up hunting and riding horses on our ranch in West Texas, and learned to love the outdoors at a very young age. My first real introduction to biology was when I began to catch and identify the spiders and scorpions that were always finding their way into our house. I became interested in reptiles and amphibians, and pursue them around the world in my free time. I completed my B.S. in Biology here at Sul Ross. During my senior year I began to volunteer in the Natural Resource Management department, and then worked as a technician for the Borderlands Research Institute on a quail project. I am now working on my Master's degree in Wildlife Management, with Dr. Moody Harveson as my advisor.

Thesis Project: Evaluating Mountain Lion (*Puma concolor*) Population Density, Habitat Selection, and Prey Availability Using Remote Cameras in the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend National Park

Two recent attacks on visitors to Big Bend National Park by mountain lions suggested a need to understand the current population of cats, and develop a method for monitoring the population in the future. Additionally, it is important to understand selected habitat and prey availability to identify areas that might require more intense monitoring. Remote cameras offer a way to survey multiple species, over large areas, for a continuous amount of time. Cameras will be positioned over a 450 km² area, at sites likely to capture cats and other wildlife. Population density will be analyzed using site occupancy modeling, and habitat will be evaluated for elevation and ruggedness.

