

# Carolina Medina-Nava — BRI Undergraduate Researcher

My name is Carolina Medina-Nava and I was born and raised in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. Since I was a child I have developed a love for wildlife and exotics by spending most of my time volunteering as a veterinarian technician and working on my parent's cattle ranch located southeast of Monterrey. In the summer of 2010 I decided to move to Texas to obtain a better high-level education and improve my second language, English. I have been beyond blessed to work and volunteer for multiple ranches in south Texas and the hill country on deer breeding facilities. My latest experience was traveling throughout most of the eastern United States and northern Mexico as an artificial insemination technician on whitetail deer, mule deer, and elk. In the spring of 2015, I transferred to Sul Ross State University as a junior. I am looking to graduate in the spring of 2017 with a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resources Management with an emphasis in Wildlife Management.

I have been granted the opportunity to work for the Borderland Research Institute (BRI) as a wildlife technician. I am assisting my mentor Price Rumbelow, a graduate student and research assistant for the BRI, on his thesis project: "Puma and Human Interactions in the Chisos Mountains of the Big Bend National Park". Currently I am conducting a study on visitor trail use and large carnivore encounters in Big Bend National Park. I will finish the project by the summer of 2015 and hopefully be able to continue expanding my knowledge and experiences here at Sul Ross by conducting research on a different project next year.



## Trail Preference and Large Carnivore Encounters by Visitors of Big Bend National Park

*1 March — 15 August, 2015*

The National Park Service (NPS) encourages restoration and conservation of native species for the enjoyment of the public now and in the future. Management of park visitors should seek to prevent conflicts with conservation and preservation of the ecosystems while maximizing the benefits of the recreational experience to the visitors. With the focus by the NPS on conservation of native species, while acknowledging the risk posed by large carnivores such as black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and puma (*Puma concolor*), we seek to understand the use preferences of trails by visitors in Big Bend National Park (BBNP). We have deployed trail monitors on 20 trails in the greater Chisos Mountains area of BBNP. Black bear and puma encounters have been compiled and maintained in a computer database by the NPS staff at BBNP via visitors' observation cards. Data gathered with trail monitors will be used to compare where and when visitors have a higher chance of encountering large carnivores while hiking. This study will provide information to help BBNP fulfill their management needs and the expectations of park visitors.



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