Joshua Ryan Coward, M.S. Thesis Candidate

My name is Josh Coward and I am originally from Harper, Texas. I was fortunate enough to grow up on a ranch in the beautiful Texas Hill Country. I was raised by environmentally conscious parents who wanted me to understand my impact on this planet, and who instilled in me a deep-seated love for wild things. This idealism and love for the outdoors led me to pursue an undergraduate degree in Wildlife Biology at Texas Tech University. During my time in Lubbock I was actively involved in the Quail-Tech Alliance, a research organization heavily involved in bobwhite quail research with private landowners. This undergraduate experience provided me with the experience to obtain a few interesting jobs post-graduation. Eventually I ended up as a research technician on the Kerr Wildlife Management area assisting with feral swine research. This job afforded me the opportunity to build a data set for a graduate thesis project at Sul Ross State University.

Thesis Project: Evaluation of Soil Erosion and Changes in Plant Communities Resulting from Rooting Behavior of Invasive Wild Pigs in the Edwards Plateau Ecoregion of Texas.

Invasive wild pigs cause an estimated $1.5 billion of damages to crops, depredation of livestock, spread of disease, and labor and equipment cost for control efforts annually. Feral pigs also exhibit destructive rooting behavior which can potentially lead to soil erosion and changes in the plant communities through disturbance. No research, to date, has been conducted assessing the damage to soils resulting from feral pig rooting behavior in the Edwards plateau ecoregion. Bearing this in mind, the effects of feral pig rooting behavior in relation to soil erosion and changes in plant communities is a question of potential research value. My project will examine how feral swine rooting behavior effects soil components, including soil erosion/deposition, as well as how plant communities at rooted sites recover after initial disturbance.

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