

Cullom Simpson, M.S. Thesis Candidate



My name is Cullom Simpson. I was raised in the used to be small town of Boerne, Texas. An appreciation for wildlife developed at a young age growing up in the Texas Hill Country. I often times spent my mornings and evenings as a child exploring creeks catching sunfish or learning to spot and stalk white-tailed deer on nearby ranches. My passion for wildlife continued as I attended Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas majoring in wildlife science. During my undergraduate career I worked as a research technician studying White-tipped doves in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and translocation of Northern bobwhite in the Rolling Plains of Texas. I also volunteered with Texas Parks and Wildlife helping with various projects including Rio Grande turkey captures and CWD check stations. I will be continuing my education and working on my Master's Degree in Natural Resource Management under Dr. Whitney Gann and Dr. Louis Harveson.

Thesis Project: Influence of Prairie Dog Colonies on Vegetation and Cattle Movement in the Marathon Basin

The Black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) plays an important role in maintaining biological stability in western grasslands. Texas Parks and Wildlife inventory of prairie dog populations revealed that their range had decreased in the southern and western boundary of their historical range in the Trans-Pecos. Potential competition between prairie dogs and cattle influences conservation and management strategies for these native herbivores. Understanding the relationship between cattle and prairie dogs is important for maintaining health in grasslands and guiding sound species management. Our objectives for this study include evaluating movement and grazing patterns of cattle in the prairie dog colonies, assessing spatial variation and trade-offs between forage quality and quantity in and out of prairie dog colonies and documenting seasonal variation in forage quality and quantity. This data will allow us to obtain a better understanding of how prairie dog colonies influence cattle and play an important role in educating the public about prairie dogs role in grassland systems.

