

Mark J. Black — BRI Undergraduate Researcher

Born in west Texas in 1971, I spent my childhood exploring the desert surrounding El Paso and going to summer camp at the Prude Ranch near Fort Davis. In 1981, my family moved to Austin where I spent the next two decades of life attending Westlake High School, Austin Community College, and the University of Texas, all the while being employed in a multitude of settings. Dana, my wife of almost 14 years, and I decided to move to her hometown of McAllen, Texas in 2004 for the purpose of earning academic degrees. Two years later, I graduated with an Associate's Degree in Applied Science in Radiological Technology and Dana achieved a Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy. With our new credentials we promptly left the Rio Grande Valley for Portland, Oregon and worked in hospitals there for the next five years. Family brought us back to Austin in 2011. Four years later, the "call of the wild" beckoned me back to west Texas where I began the fall semester as a junior at Sul Ross State University in 2015. I have rekindled a life-long passion for nature by studying Natural Resource Management with a concentration in Conservation Biology. Now employed by the Borderlands Research Institute as an undergraduate research assistant for the Trans-Pecos Pronghorn Restoration Project, I find myself at home once again amongst the beauty of this diverse land that I so loved as a child. I have had the good fortune to have travelled to over 30 countries throughout my life, and Texas will always be home.



Monitoring Barber Pole Worms in Pronghorn in the Trans-Pecos, Texas

1 March — 31 October 2016

Texas Parks and Wildlife, in conjunction with the Borderlands Research Institute, have charged me with determining parasite loads of pronghorn in areas of the Trans-Pecos. The two study sites are near Marathon and Marfa, approximately 30 and 40 miles from Alpine, respectively. I am to collect fresh fecal samples from both resident and translocated pronghorn from these areas. This entails many hours of fieldwork, as well as much time spent in the lab. Once the samples are collected, they must be kept cold until processed. A procedure that enables microscopic visualization of eggs of the parasite *Haemonchus contortus* is performed on each sample obtained. Recorded data will be analyzed and compared with previous studies. Parasite loads of ruminants are of significant importance to both wildlife managers and livestock owners alike. I feel extremely fortunate to be a member of a research team that has the rare opportunity to study such a unique and iconic animal.



The BRI Undergraduate Research and Mentorship Program is proudly supported by a grant from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.