

Desert Tracks

"Helping conserve the natural resources of the Chihuahuan Desert Borderlands through research, education, & outreach."



RESEARCH IN ACTION:

A Quail of Many Names: The Mysterious Montezuma

Curtis Greene and Louis A. Harveson

Whether you know them as Montezuma quail, Mearn's quail, harlequin quail, crazy quail, black quail, or fool's quail, you can't help but appreciate the beauty of this Chihuahuan Desert species. Montezuma quail are a favorite among the 1,000s of birders that flock to west Texas. So much so that Montezuma quail have been dubbed the "nongame gamebird" in Texas as they are a gamebird but with a closed hunting season.

In an effort to better understand their movements and population ecology, we initiated a study in the Davis Mountains. We used night-capture techniques and trained dogs to capture, band, and monitor Montezuma quail. During the 2-year study, we captured and radioed 68 Montezuma quail.

We made many unexpected discoveries about their behavior. Prior to this study, most believed Montezuma quail to be relatively sedentary birds that did not travel far from their birth place. However, average home range size was 5,310 acres and ranged from 42 to 38,921 acres. In our study, it was not uncommon for Montezuma quail to move 5-7 miles (straight-line distance) within a 2-3 week period.

Unlike most quail, Montezuma dig for their food. Our study corroborated this peculiar behavior in that Montezuma quail were associated with habitats that had high densities of tuber-producing food plants like



A female (l) and male (r) Montezuma quail squat in the shade of bunch grass and rocks along a hillside in west Texas.

wood sorrel, sedges, and wild onion. Montezuma quail also preferred habitats with moderate slopes (20-30%) and rock outcrops, which in combination create microhabitats conducive to subterranean foods.

We concur with previous studies that cautioned against heavy livestock grazing in Montezuma habitat. Montezuma quail are very reluctant to fly and rely heavily on screening cover (e.g., perennial grasses, rocks). Management practices that maximize food plants and conserve herbaceous cover should enhance populations of Montezuma quail.

For more information on the Desert Quail Program with the BRI, please contact Dr. Ryan S. Luna at 432.837.8225 or rluna@sulross.edu.

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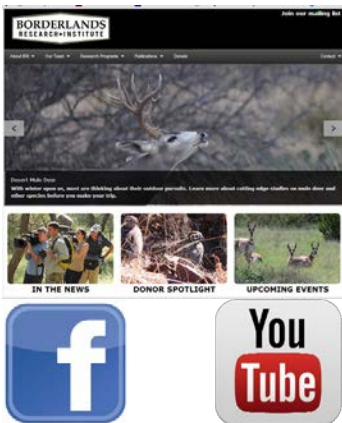
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Dr. Bonnie J. Warnock, Clint Josey Endowed Chair and Professor of Range Management
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The Borderlands Research Institute recently launched a new website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel to better serve the landowners and managers of the Chihuahuan Desert. Please take the time to browse each site to find out more about the natural resources of the region.

From the Director—“BRI Has New Website, Social Media”

The Borderlands Research Institute (BRI) places a premium on our outreach mission. Outreach is the process of getting pertinent information in the hands of those who make the most difference—land managers, land owners, and resource professionals.

To that end, the BRI has spent the last year developing a new website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel. Each medium has enhanced features and information regarding natural resource management.

To date, BRI Facebook page has over 350 “likes” and has reached over 7,000 individuals. In it you will find brief updates from our research studies, photographs from the

field, and recent BRI activities. You will also find over 20 short videos on our YouTube channel ranging from pronghorn restoration videos to student interviews.

Lastly, our website (<http://www.sulross.edu/brinrm>) has received a total overhaul with news releases, magazine articles, archives of our newsletter, and many other features.

This type of effort could not have been possible without the generosity of the James A. “Buddy” Davidson Charitable Foundation, Wayne and Jo Ann Moore Charitable Foundation, and the Beal Foundation.

—Louis A. Harveson

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Welcome Sara Gray and Ryan O’Shaughnessy to BRI

We are pleased to welcome Sara Gray and Ryan O’Shaughnessy to the Borderlands Research Institute (BRI).

Sara is the new Office Coordinator for the BRI. Sara comes to us via Austin, Texas where she worked at the Texas Natural Science Center. In the short amount of time with BRI, Sara has already proved herself invaluable in customer relations, coordination, and logistics.



Dr. Ryan O’Shaughnessy recently completed his doctorate at Southern Illinois University, where he studied waterfowl-habitat relationships.

Dr. O’Shaughnessy will be coordinating the research activities for the Pronghorn Restoration and Monitoring Project.

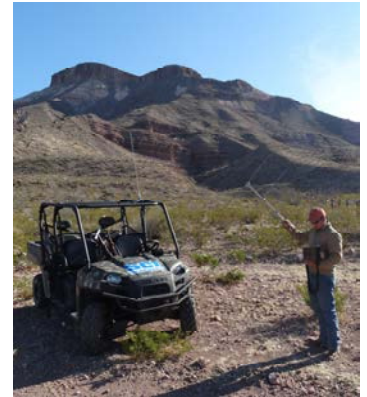
Donor Spotlight: Safari Club International Foundation

The Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF), an international leader in conservation, recently awarded the Borderlands Research Institute (BRI) with \$39,000 to support the Desert Big Game Program.

SCIF sponsored the purchase of a Polaris Ranger for the Desert Bighorn Sheep Restoration and Monitoring Project. The Desert Bighorn Sheep Project is part of a collaborative effort with Texas Parks and Wildlife De-

partment and private landowners to help restore bighorn sheep to former habitats.

SCIF also provided support to the Desert Mule Deer Antler Development Study, which is a long-term study investigating antler development in mule deer across a spectrum of management strategies. The study will also address population dynamics, survival, aging techniques, and dispersal in desert mule deer in west Texas.



SCI Foundation recently donated \$39,000 to support the Desert Big Game Program at BRI, including the purchase of this Polaris Ranger.

Hughes Named Chairman of TPW Commission

Dan Allen Hughes, Jr., San Antonio/Beeville, was recently appointed Chairman of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission (TPWC) by Governor Rick Perry. Hughes was appointed to the TPWC board in 2009 for a six-year term.

Hughes is a member of the Advisory Board of the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University and received the

Slingin' Sammy Baugh Award for Outstanding Service to Sul Ross in 2012.

Hughes is president of Dan A. Hughes Company, LP; president of Hupecol Operating Company, LLC; and CEO of Maverick American Natural Gas. He is a member of the Texas A&M University College of Geosciences Advisory Council and is a member of the All American Wildcatters. He is also a 1980 Texas A&M graduate.

Over 90% of our funding comes through private donations!

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Borderlands Research Institute.

Dixon Water Foundation Establishes Endowed Chair

The Dixon Water Foundation recently established the Clint Josey Endowed Chair for Sustainable Ranch Management at Sul Ross State University (SRSU).

The \$1.2 million gift honors Clint Josey who serves as Vice President and Chairman of the Dixon Water Foundation Board.

The Dixon Water Foundation has been a long-time supporter of the Range Management Program and the Borderlands Research Institute at Sul Ross State University.

Dr. Bonnie Warnock, Professor of Range Management and Research Scientist with the Borderlands Research Institute has been named the first holder of the Clint Josey Endowed Chair.

This is the second endowed position at SRSU with both endowments being in natural resource management. The first endowed position at SRSU was established in 2012 by Peggy and Dan Allen Hughes, Jr. with the Borderlands Research Institute.



Representatives from SRSU and the Dixon Water Foundation (DWF) execute an agreement to establish the Clint Josey Endowed Chair. Participants included (back to front, l-r): Dave Rogers (Chair, SRSU Foundation), Dr. Bonnie Warnock, Dr. Robert Kinucan (Dean, ANRS), Clint Josey (Chair, DWF), Dr. Quint Thurman (Interim President), and Robert Potts (CEO, DWF).



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TPWD and BRI to Host 2014 Pronghorn Workshop

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Borderlands Research Institute will be hosting the 26th Biennial Pronghorn Workshop in Alpine, Texas from May 12-14, 2014.

Keynote speakers for the Workshop include Carter Smith, Executive Director of TPWD; Greg Simons, President of Texas Wildlife Association and owner of Wildlife Systems; and Dr. Dan McBride, wildlife veterinarian, outfitter, and pronghorn advocate.

The 2-day workshop will include presentations on research projects, contemporary management strategies, and status reports from across western North America. The workshop will culminate with a field tour of various ecosystems in the Big Bend.

Information about the workshop, program, registration, and important contacts can be found at <http://ww2.sulross.edu/brinrm/2014pronghornworkshop.html>.



Mark your calendars for May 12-14 for the 26th Biennial Pronghorn Workshop at Sul Ross State University. Biologists and managers from across North America will present on pronghorn ecology and management.