

Rachel Bittner, M.S. Thesis Candidate



My name is Rachel Bittner and I am from the small town of Lockhart, Texas. I grew up hiking and camping with my family in state parks throughout Texas where I developed a love for wildlife and the great outdoors. I received my B.S. in Natural Resources Management with a concentration in Wildlife Biology from Texas Tech University May of 2018. During my undergraduate career I worked as a student research technician for three different Ph.D. students who were respectively studying Dwarf Seahorses, Elk, and Axis Deer. During this time, I also had the opportunity to volunteer with many other research projects, including studies on Mule Deer, Lesser Prairie Chickens, Northern Bobwhite, and Guadalupe Bass. My undergraduate research focused on using species distribution models to predict suitable habitat for seagrass using the Texas gulf coast as a case study. I will be working on my Master's Degree in Natural Resources Management under Dr. Ryan Luna.

Thesis Project: Assessing prevalence of eyeworm infestations in Scaled Quail throughout the Trans-Pecos region of Texas

Scaled quail (*Callipepla squamata*) occur in the arid Southwest region of the US and throughout north-east Mexico. The population of scaled quail have been in decline since the 1960s throughout the southwest due to habitat loss, changing range conditions, and other related reasons. Eyeworms, a parasitic nematode, can be found in scaled quail, however their prevalence has not been assessed. The objectives of this study are to assess prevalence of eyeworms in scaled quail with regard to age and sex, as well as associations with precipitation gradients across the Trans-Pecos. Additionally, sites that provide supplemental feed will also be assessed to determine if parasite loads increase as quail densities increase around feeding sites.



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