STUDENT PROFILE

Preston is from a tiny town in southeastern New Mexico called Hope, where his passion for wildlife began. He grew up in a hunting family that created his passion for the outdoors. This passion grew into a career path leading Preston to pursue a degree in wildlife management at Sul Ross State University. Opportunities to utilize the outdoor classroom in the Natural Resource Management department and the student chapter of The Wildlife Society led to an appreciation of the outdoors and research. His passion has been with big game animals that led him to Borderlands Research Institute to study mule deer and desert bighorn.

PROJECT PROFILE

Mule deer are an iconic western species in the United States that have been experiencing population declines locally in Texas since the late 1980s, especially in the extreme arid regions. Population declines are due to habitat loss and droughts. These declines created a need to understand what mule deer are selecting for as well as how they are moving in the habitat. Preston’s work fills this need by looking into how translocated mule deer change habitat selection and movement in Black Gap Wildlife Management Area to adapt to this extreme arid region. Using data from a 2019 mule deer translocation, Preston will determine habitat selection and movement metrics of mule deer. Another species of conservation concern occupies this same area. This species is the desert bighorn. Studies of this species in Black Gap Wildlife Management Area have shown that mortality rates differ between resident, hard-released, and soft-released desert bighorn sheep. Preston is using this finding and GPS data from a translocation in 2017 to see if habitat selection is a causing factor of these different mortality rates.