

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS

The Boone and Crockett Club University Programs is designed to provide science-based knowledge from seasoned wildlife professionals and educators to college graduates in the wildlife field to better prepare the graduates for the responsible and wise management of wildlife in the future.

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2021 BOONE AND CROCKETT FELLOW OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN GRADUATE RESEARCH

The Boone and Crockett Club's University Programs offers educational and professional development opportunities that prepare future scientists, decision-makers, and leaders to address the enormous challenges facing wildlife conservation.

The Club established the annual Boone and Crockett Fellow Outstanding Achievement Award in 2019 to recognize a graduate student whose research advances the Club's mission and informs natural resource management and policy decisions in North America. The award also highlights and strengthens the connection between students and the Boone and Crockett Club that supports them. Awardees are selected on the basis of the relevance and significance of their research, the quality of their work, and their commitment to leadership, effective communication, and outreach.

The pool of applicants for the 2021 Outstanding Boone and Crockett Fellow was excellent. The selection committee could find no distinction

between the top two applicants and chose to honor both with the award.

Congratulations to this year's outstanding fellows, Ellen Pero of the University of Montana and Levi Heffelfinger of Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Both awardees are doctoral students that graduated in December 2021. Ellen studied spatial, demographic, physiological, and behavioral response of elk to restoration efforts in southeastern Missouri. Levi's research focused on the effects of agricultural crops on mule deer in the Texas Panhandle and on the effects of diets low in digestible energy on white-tail deer.

Levi was able to attend the Boone and Crockett Annual Meeting in New Orleans in December. He presented his research to the membership during a luncheon. ■



Levi presented his research titled, *Mule Deer and Anthropogenic Change: Effects of Agricultural Encroachment on Movement, Morphology, and Population Performance.*

"As I was finishing my master's degree, I realized I wanted to pursue a Ph.D. While searching for and applying for positions, the decision came down to two choices. I could work on elk and mule deer in the mountains of Oregon or move to deep South Texas where I could work on mule deer—the latter requiring frequent travel to field work far away. Growing up in the mountainous public land state of Arizona, I made a choice that might seem obvious to some. The choice, however, was much more difficult than one would assume because the position at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville came with an added perk. The opportunity to be a Boone and Crockett Fellow was extremely attractive to me.

I have always held the Boone and Crockett Club in high regard. Even at the early stages of my career, I understood that the Club stood for much more than simply keeping records. I accepted the position in Texas and could not have been more pleased with how my degree turned out. The opportunities that have been given to me through the Club are forever lasting and have enhanced my development as an early professional. I truly appreciate the personal and professional connections I have garnered. My admiration for the Club made winning the Outstanding Achievement Award in Graduate Research ever more special to me.

The chance to share my research at the recent annual meeting was extremely rewarding. I especially enjoyed getting to meet the members and enhancing my knowledge of the inner workings of the Club. I plan to carry forth the mission and ideology of the Boone and Crockett Club through my career—especially in the face of ever-changing conservation concerns surrounding our natural resources. As a fellow I have learned to be forever questioning, yet open, to learning. I also see the importance of remaining humble while reaching for my goals. Thank you to the Boone and Crockett Club for such an amazing opportunity. I look forward to helping the Club in any way possible in the future."

- B&C Fellow Levi Heffelfinger

BOONE AND CROCKETT FELLOW PROFILES

LEVI HEFFELFINGER

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-KINGSVILLE - CAESAR KLEBERG
WILDLIFE RESEARCH INSTITUTE - PH.D. - 2021

DISSERTATION TITLE: Resource selection, habitat influences on population performance, and body size trade-offs of cervids in a nutritionally variable environment

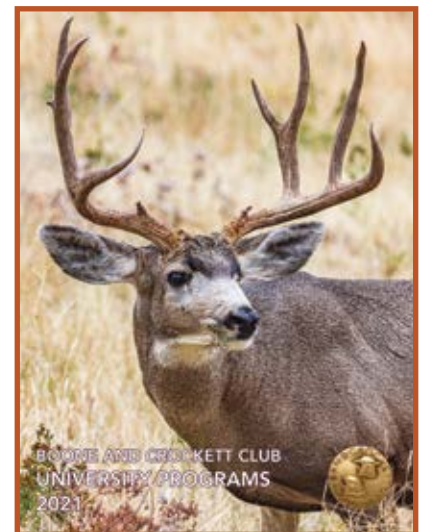
Levi grew up with an early influence in wildlife science in southern Arizona. From a young age, he accompanied his dad on wildlife surveys and captures. Being an avid hunter, his appreciation for the outdoors has driven his love for wildlife research. Levi earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona and his master's degree from University of Nevada, Reno, where he worked with mule deer movement and demographics in the Mojave Desert. Levi's doctoral work focused on the influence of fragmented landscapes (energy and agricultural development) on mule deer movement and population performance. In the future, he hopes to work at the interface of management and research of large game animals.

ELLEN PERO

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA - PH.D. - 2021

DISSERTATION TITLE: Integrated ecology of a reintroduction: management of restored elk in Missouri

Ellen will be presenting her research to B&C members at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March 2022. She will be featured in the Summer 2022 issue of *Fair Chase*.



LEFT TO RIGHT: James F. Arnold, B&C President, Levi Heffelfinger, B&C Fellow, and David G. Hewitt, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute Director at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. As his professor at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, David Hewitt introduced Levi and his research.

Learn more about each university, their programs, and students in the 2021 University Programs Annual Report available online. If you would like a printed copy please contact Boone and Crockett Club Headquarters at (406) 542-1888 or email Karlie@Boone-Crockett.org