



WAFWA
Western Quail Working Group
Vail, Colorado, July 9, 2017
Meeting Minutes

1. Casey called the meeting to order at 8:03 A.M. and asked for attendee introductions. Twenty-two individuals were in attendance, 19 signed in.
2. A request was made to attendees for additional agenda items. Sam Lawry suggested the group revisit the idea of a Western Quail Coordinator. It was added to the agenda for discussion (#12).
3. Casey apologized for not distributing the 2016 meeting minutes prior to the meeting, and gave a brief overview of last year's meeting. Billy Tarrant (TPWD) made a motion to approve the minutes, with a second from Sam Lawry (PF/QF). The motion passed.
4. A Western Quail Technical Staff meeting was held in Roswell, New Mexico, May 22-24, 2017. Casey gave an overview of the meeting.
 - a. Representatives from 8 states were present, (AZ, CA, KS, NM, OK, OR, TX, WA), along with individuals from BLM, NM State Land Office, and New Mexico Youth Conservation Foundation.
 - b. Dr. Dwayne Elmore from OSU presented scaled quail research. Papers on Oklahoma's quail research can be found at:
<http://wildlifechairs.okstate.edu/resources/research-pubs.html>. Major points from his talk include:
 - i. Climate should be taken into consideration when making focal area decisions
 - ii. Galliforms are highly responsive to thermal environment
 - iii. Thermal cover is a part of habitat
 - iv. Vegetation management influences thermal cover
 - v. Heterogeneity in landscapes is a hedge for discrete conditions
 - c. Becky Ruzicka presented research in progress about scaled quail translocations in Texas. The research goal is to "improve effectiveness of translocation as a tool to reestablish scaled quail within the Rolling Plains."
 - d. Dave Budeau presented research on "Distribution of Mountain Quail in Eastern Oregon: Incorporating citizen science to monitor populations".
 - e. The Roswell New Mexico BLM presented some of the habitat prescriptions they are doing (PJ thinning, Mesquite Removal, Prescribed Burning), and how they are helping coordinate quail research on these project sites.
 - f. Students from Sul Ross discussed their research on "Ecology of Montezuma Quail in the Capitan Mountains of New Mexico"
 - g. Scott Lerich discussed how National Wild Turkey Federation is able to assist State and Federal agencies with getting habitat dollars on the ground, and how they can use their Regional Biologists to help on Quail habitat projects.

- h. New Mexico Youth Conservation Foundation/First in the Field presented information on how they are working with NMDGF on R3 initiatives. Their group hosts skill-based camps to provide youth and their families an opportunity to learn basic and advanced skills in hunting, angling, and shooting sports.
 - i. The working group started some action items which will be covered in more detail further in these minutes. These items include an Annual Report to better clarify activities of the group, a Translocation Guideline Document, a Group Logo, and future projects to pursue.
- 5. The group discussed an amendment to the Western Quail Working Group MOU to add Federal Agencies to the Working Group Collaboration. Casey talked with former USFS Biologist, Gail Tunberg and AZDGF Biologist Jonathan O'Dell, and both remember a MOU Amendment that was signed in 2012, though no one knows where it is. This would be likely be expired by now (5 year life), so it was proposed that the technical staff draft a new Amendment. A motion was made by Josh Avey (AZDGF) and seconded by Geoffrey Walsh (BLM) to present this to the Directors for approval. The motion passed. The following will be presented at the Business Meeting:
 - Motion:** The WQWG recommends that the Directors approve an amendment to the current Western Quail MOU to include the BLM, USFS, and NRCS as signators.
- 6. Sam Lawry, Howard Vincent, Bob Hix, and Chris McLeland gave an update from Quail Forever. Unfortunately, no members from QF were able to make the technical staff meeting in May, as they were at their National team meeting, but the commitment to Quail Forever in the west is still present and getting stronger. QF is coming into its 12th year, and is finally getting through some of its growing pains and to solid establishment. There is a new Quail Forever Development officer working out of TX, who raises dollars to increase the amount of habitat funding is available. In the west, there is a lot of potential for expansion of chapter growth. Current chapters include: 2 in AZ, 2 in NM, 8 in CA, 1 idle in ID. Chris McLeland is new within the last year. There has been a lot of chapter growth in OK, TX, and AR, and his challenge is getting to all the interested locations. Looking to add 22 new biologists in the south region to work on quail habitat. Bob Hix- has a very large area to cover (CO, NM, AZ), and is just starting a new chapter of QF in Wyoming, and has some leads on chapters in the future. Bob is excited about the collaborations that have been undertaken thus far, (Mearn's quail and USFS; Farm Bill biologists and NRCS). He keeps encouraging chapters to think about the big picture and look outside of their range for habitat projects. QF and BLM have entered into an MOU, which will help with maintenance of quail beneficial infrastructure on BLM lands. QF is also partnering with AZDGF on 2 positions.
- 7. **State Reports:**
 - Arizona:** Gambel's quail are monitored through Call Count surveys. 2010 had the lowest numbers recorded for the state, but populations are on a positive trend with counts in 2017 higher than the short (10 years) and long term averages. AZDGF does some intra-state Gambel's translocations from urban areas onto Wildlife Management Areas, and has a study on the most opportune times for translocation, and if there are impacts to local populations with these movements. Arizona Mearn's quail follow boom and bust cycles and current trends are mirroring the previous cycle almost identically. Numbers are on the upward part of the cycle, and

biologists estimate that populations will be very strong in a couple years. AZDGF is pursuing research on Mearn's response to two large wild fires (Rodeo-Chediski (2002) and Wallow (2011)) on the northern edge of their range. One of the collaborative positions with QF is using call back surveys to assess habitat use in these areas. The second QF collaborative position has already gotten a 12,000 ac. Mearn's quail habitat improvement project with USFS, Border Patrol, and the Buffet Family. There has been some mesquite grubbing work in the southeast for scaled quail. The Masked Bobwhite Recovery Team is trying a surrogate program with sterilized bobwhites from TX to "rewild" captive reared birds. Working on potential California quail translocations to areas in their former range, this has been greatly reduced. AZ just switched to online harvest reporting. There was a special harvest survey of Mearn's quail hunters (from wing barrel collection info), but not sure how this will be impacted by online switch.

California: There is no monitoring system in place for quail in California, except guzzler counts for Gambel's quail. CA is currently using BBS data to assess quail population trends in the different regions. Mountain and California quail are declining in most regions, except Modoc, and Gambel's are following boom and bust cycles. CA is working on a new management plan with large to local scale population trends and what management actions to take. Would like to try fall roadside counts to monitor trends, and could create a fall forecast from this information to re-engage hunters. Recently switched from phone harvest survey to an online survey. In 2014 (phone survey), harvest estimates were as follows: 300,000 California Quail, 118,000 Mountain Quail, and 38,000 Gambel's quail. The online survey is sent to upland stamp purchasers, and Kathrine is currently analyzing the 2016 online harvest survey data. The Upland Stamp Program provides some funding for state research. Some topics of interested that may be pursued in the future include: habitat modeling and population decline, or Gambel's Quail nesting ecology. CA passed a non-lead policy, and by 2019 non-lead shot will be required across the state.

Kansas: Scaled quail have limited distribution in the SW region of the state. There are no scaled quail specific surveys, but they are documented on summer roadside surveys. Looking into the potential of call count surveys. Quail densities statewide (bobwhite and scaled) are up 231% in the last few years. Harvest estimates for scaled quail in 2016-17 was $11,446 \pm 4,135$. Scaled quail range in KS tends to have a lack of shrub component from re-vegetation efforts following the dust bowl. Local biologists have been working with USFS to increase the distribution of shrub cover or add artificial structures when shrub establishment isn't feasible. There is a private lands habitat program- Habitat First. This is going to receive a boost in funding as it switches from 100% KDWPT funding to P-R funds, which will more than quadruple the funds for private land habitat improvement. A note on bobwhite: the 2017 whistle call counts surveys were about 3% higher than last year (no statistical difference); overall all regions are above the long term average.

New Mexico: Quail seem to be on the rebound in NM. 2013 -14 were bad years for quail, with low numbers across the state, but things are looking up in 2015-16, with high numbers observed, particularly in the SE. Montezuma Quail are doing

well in the Gila burn areas, and NM is getting similar reports as AZ of quail in locations not seen before. In SW and Central NM, quail are not recovering from the drought as well. Trying some pilot studies on call count and fall roadside surveys. Call count routes were conducted in association with LEPC routes, and fall surveys will assess recruitment trends for a fall hunting forecast. Hunter harvest surveys are voluntary, online surveys, with about 23% return rate from all small game license holders. Current research on Western Quail include: response of scaled quail to creosote treatments, demography and space use of sympatric populations of Gambel's and scaled quail in the Chihuahuan Desert, and a new study with OSU on the response of scaled quail to prescribed fire and mesquite removal.

Oklahoma: Oklahoma conducts 20 mile fall roadside surveys through all but 2 of its counties. 2016 yielded the highest quail counts since 2005. The harvest survey is a phone survey that has been conducted since 1986. Hunter numbers are finally bouncing back from 2013 (14,000 hunters in 2013, 27,000 hunters in 2016). Harvest is not broken out by species, but total quail harvest for the state was 490,000 birds in 2016. The state partners with OSU on quail research, and one project is looking at habitat use on salt cedar and juniper treatments.

Oregon: Oregon has 2 species of quail state-wide, with California quail more abundant in the east (translocated throughout the state from late 1800's) and Mountain quail more abundant in the west (suffered range contraction, but have worked to reverse this). Population surveys are conducted as roadside and drift routes conducted in late July and early August to estimate chicks/adult and birds/10 miles of route (best estimator of fall hunt success). 1,500 miles of routes are conducted annually. A harvest survey is conducted by telephone from randomly selected upland game bird license purchasers. 3,600 hunters are called monthly through the season to estimate total harvest and harvest by month. Several State wildlife areas have implemented habitat projects for quail, and ODFW partners with USFS for projects on federal lands. ODFW has translocated mountain quail from SW Oregon across their historic range from 2001 to the present. More than 2,550 birds have been moved in-state from 2001-2017. In 2017, 148 birds were moved, with 50 of them receiving radio-tags to monitor movements, survival, and reproductive success. OR allowed NV to move 100 mountain quail for reintroduction.

Texas: Briefly reviewed some of the habitat management projects in District 1 and 2 in TX. Some of the projects currently undertaken on wildlife management areas include: Wildlife Ramps in tanks, guzzlers, pond sealants, food plots, and shrub treatments. Texas partners with NWTf and now QF on biologist positions working on upland habitats. Texas Gambel's Bulletin was just finished. TPWD translocated 180 Gambel's from Candelaria to private lands near the El Carmon Mountains, they are now showing up on Black Gap WMA. TPWD and Texas A&M have a Montezuma Quail research project on the Edwards Plateau assessing survey techniques. TX would like to determine what is happening to populations in the area as some ranches may have potential for translocation. There is a formal roadside index survey for Scaled Quail goes back to 1978. The Trans Pecos population is current stable, but the rest of the state is in decline. There is some

experimentation translocating Chestnut-bellied subspecies from south Texas to the Rolling Plains. Texas is observing when scaled quail populations crash and are at low levels, they no longer follow boom-bust cycles. Currently have a Geospatial Researcher investigating changes in historic habitats: i.e. brush, exotic grasses, etc.

Utah: 3 species of quail; native Gambel's, native/augmented Scaled, introduced California's. There is one chapter of QF in southern UT. There is currently no Scaled Quail hunt, as there are only a handful of sightings in four corners area. In 2015, 1201 Hunters Harvested 5,653 California quail and 724 hunters harvested 2,263 Gambel's quail. Population monitoring involves recording scaled quail sightings, and annual waterhole counts for Gambel's Quail: Total #, adult:juv ratio. There is no monitoring of California quail. Currently have some translocations. Released 100 Gambel's quail SW UT in 2016- received from AZ. Released 200 scaled quail in 2014 and 200 in 2015- received from Colorado. 10% had radio transmitters, and there was high mortality in the first 4 weeks. California's quail have active translocations of "nuisance" birds in urban areas. There was a recently completed Gambel's Quail telemetry study in SW UT on guzzler use.

Washington: 3 species of harvestable quail. Mountain quail only open in the west due to declining populations. There was a translocation in 2012 of birds from Oregon, but success was low. Biologists would like to assess habitat components first, before attempting another translocation. 75,000-80,000 quail are harvested each year (not separated by species). There are 30,000 mail surveys that go out each year, and return rates are 12-16%. This mail survey is followed up with a phone survey. WA has a translocation program moving urban "nuisance birds" to state lands. This is not really to augment populations, mostly for additional hunting opportunities. Looking into Rural Mail Carrier Survey for monitoring populations.

8. Casey presented discussion from the technical staff on creating an annual report. This report would include an update on Western Quail Management Plan implementation, a "State of Western Quail" report, and current research being conducted on western quail. The WAFWA attendees were in favor of an Annual Report.
 - a. Creating an annual output will help the WQWG better show how they are taking action to implement the plan
 - b. State of Western Quail- The technical staff will start producing an annual document synthesizing information on individual quail species rangewide. A questionnaire will be distributed to each state annually and biologists will report on general trend and any reports (harvest or population surveys) we can use to estimate change over time.
 - c. Federal agencies can provide an update on acres treated in quail habitat or any current research on Federal Lands.
 - d. Listing all current research will help the States avoid redundancy and better define where knowledge gaps occur. The Wildlife Chiefs are compiling all proposed,

completed, and continuing research across western States. This will be updated annually, January every year and could help coordination of with large scale, across boundary research in the future. The WQWG could use this document to update their annual research compilation.

9. Casey presented on a Translocation Guideline discussion from the technical staff meeting. With increased interest in moving birds between states, the technical staff identified a need for an Interstate Translocation Guideline Document. KDWPT recently finished their “Guidelines for requesting Out-of-State Translocation of Upland Game Birds”, and allowed the WQWG to use this document as a template. Some needs identified by the technical staff include:
 - a. Primary communication about translocation start with a State’s Program Lead
 - b. Following these discussions a formal letter of request could be submitted to the department
 - c. Translocations requests should contain a proposal with the following topics addressed
 - i. Translocation purpose
 - ii. Historic and current species densities
 - iii. Trapping/handling/translocation procedures
 - iv. Disease/parasite testing to be conducted
 - v. Release site evaluation
 - vi. Monitoring requirements post release, with a minimum of 2 year monitoring.

-Look at the displacement of native birds post-release

The WAFWA group was interested in moving forward with the document. Some recommendations were to take into consideration all parties that may eventually be interested in receiving birds (private individuals, federal management agencies, states), and who is expected to monitor post-release. Also, make sure there are safety outlets for rapid disposal of nuisance quail.

10. Casey discussed the potential for a Group Logo. Jonathan O’Dell said he’d ask the AZDGF Graphics Person if they would draft a couple options. Bob Hix mentioned that QF could also assist with the design. Some of the ideas on the logo included:
 - a. The Working Group Acronym with Quail Silhouettes on each letter
 - b. State outlines with quail pictures in the relative center of their range
 - c. Feather with the WQWG acronym
 - d. Potentially pick 1 quail as our symbol
11. Casey mentioned that one long term goal of the technical staff is to review monitoring methodologies (harvest and population) and assess them for consistencies so quail trends can be compared across their range.
12. The group returned to the discussion on searching for funding for a Western Quail Working Group Coordinator. Following this meeting, the general consensus was that the current chair will suffice for now, but as the group gains momentum, it may be worth re-assessing.

13. Casey is attending Quail 8 to give a progress update on the Western Quail Management Plan as part of the Plenary Session. Technical staff attending Quail 8 are planning to convene and discuss progress on the action items from the Roswell meeting.
14. The technical staff would like to meet in the same week as the Western Wild Turkey Technical Committee, as many members cover both species. Tentative date is Mid-April.

Action Items:

1. Motion for amendment to add Federal Agencies (BLM, USDA-FS, NRCS) to the amendment.
2. Prepare an annual report including: updates on Western Quail Management Plan implementation, a “State of Western Quail” report, and current western quail research.
3. Prepare a translocation guideline document that will be finalized at the next technical staff meeting for Directors approval at the WAFWA Summer 2018 meeting.
4. Compile current western quail research annually, and update the Western Quail Management Plan Research Needs section.
5. Create a WQWG logo to put on the groups output

Meeting was adjourned at 10:10.