



WAFWA
Western Quail Working Group
Eugene, Oregon, July 15, 2018
Meeting Minutes

1. Casey called the meeting to order at 8:05 A.M. and asked for attendee introductions. Twenty individuals were in attendance, 16 signed in.
2. A request was made to attendees for additional agenda items. None offered
3. Casey asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the 2017 WAFWA meeting. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed by the group.
4. A Western Quail Technical Staff meeting was held in Minden, Nevada, April 18-20, 2018.
 - a. Representatives from 8 states were present (AZ, CA, KS, NM, NV, OK, TX, UT), along with individuals from BLM and USFS.
 - b. Katherine Miller from CA gave an update the management plan she is putting together for California. Some components of the plan include
 - i. Population monitoring based on hierarchical approach looking at large scale (trends in populations, changes in land use across the state), regional scale (population demographics, regional habitat changes, potential habitat corridors), and local scale (population demographics, home range sizes)
 - ii. Potential for implementing fall roadside cruise counts- create an index right before hunting season
 - iii. Genetics
 - iv. Harvest assessment
 - c. Jeff Prendergast discussed using Cybertracker and other mobile applications for field data collection.
 - d. Robert Perez briefly discussed an article in Sporting Classics Daily that made a claim that parasitic eyeworm has the potential to devastate quail populations on a landscape scale. Several agencies and research institutes caution the public on this interpretation of findings, as there is no empirical data linking the parasite to survival, reproduction, and recruitment in bobwhite populations.
 - e. Johnathan O'Dell presented information on the small game hunter numbers in AZ. Small game is a direct link to R3 and agency outreach. In Arizona, 72% of resident hunters hunt some form of small game. Our ability to forecast the season drives hunting interest, and also drives interest in new people by providing communication with the Agency. We need to enhance small game populations to keep continued interest with current hunters.
 - f. State updates- see below
 - g. The working group finalized a draft of the Inter-state Translocation Standards of Practice document, and added several action items for the upcoming year. These action items include fact sheets on the individual quail species, as well as some

habitat guideline fact sheets, a Group Logo, and other projects to investigate for the future.

5. Casey discussed current progress to the amendment approved at last year's summer meeting to add Federal Agencies to the Working Group Collaboration.
6. Chris McLeland gave an update from Quail Forever. Al Eiden has started as the new West Regional Director, replacing Sam Lawry. There's been positive movement in capacity in Texas and Oklahoma, partnering with state agencies and joint ventures, to hire private land biologists to implement habitat for quail and other wildlife species. The chapter numbers are continuing to grow, and have helped fund the partner biologist positions and additional habitat projects.

7. State Reports:

Arizona: There were recently 20,000 of grassland habitat restoration completed in southeastern AZ, primarily mesquite grubbing. Preliminary observations are that it had positive benefits for scaled quail, though not for Gambel's quail. Also, biologists worked with the Coronado Forest on a firescape, and helped provide recommendations on thinning levels that are ideal for Montezuma quail. For Gambel's quail, the number of call counts has increased statewide as a push to better forecast populations and promote opportunity. The state has initiated a small game challenge, trying to increase revenue through a celebrity spokesperson, drawing people to Arizona hunt OTC game.

California: Currently the Department does not conduct statewide monitoring of quail populations. Beginning in 2016, Department staff obtained data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) for California and neighboring states. They used the BBS data to determine index of abundance (birds/count) and develop maps using Inverse Distance Weighting. In the winter of 2016-2017, an estimated 15,669 mountain quail hunters harvested 60,235 quail over 56,572 hunt days. For California quail, an estimated 33,577 hunters harvested 245,111 quail over 120,877 hunt days. An estimated 2,035 Gambel's quail hunters harvested 15,567 quail over 7,122 hunt days. Assembly Bill 711, signed into law in 2013, stipulates that by July 1st 2019, hunters will be required to use nonlead ammunition when hunting with a firearm in California.

Kansas: There are no scaled quail specific population surveys in Kansas, but in the Southern High Plains, quail densities decreased by 53% from the previous year following a heavy snowfall in late spring. During the 2017-18 season, approximately 2.6% of quail hunters report harvesting scaled quail, for an estimated harvest of $7,411 \pm 4,303$. Local biologists have been working with USFS personnel to increase the distribution of cover on the Cimarron National Grasslands, including cholla plantings and providing artificial structures.

Nevada: Winter 2016-17 brought an end to over four years of severe to exceptional drought in California quail range. Anecdotal observations are that California quail populations have started to rebound. Estimated California quail harvest was 8,829 quail by 1,291 hunters in the 2016-17 season, up by 8.9% and 10.2% respectively from the previous year. These numbers remain well below the 10-year averages. Several years of drought, combined with poorly timed rains in

years prior to 2016 created poor conditions for Gambel's quail. Numbers may be on the rebound following this year. Estimated Gambel's quail harvest during the 2016-17 season was 5,882 quail by 1,029 hunters. Harvest was up by 33% from the previous year, though still 58% below the 10-year average. Mountain quail may have rebounded slightly following the above average precipitation ending the drought. Estimated harvest in the 2016-17 season was 1,032 birds, up 23% from the previous season, and similar to the 10-year average. Population establishment has occurred over the last decade, with over 900 quail released during translocation efforts.

New Mexico: New Mexico Game and Fish does not have current population estimates for quail species. Breeding bird data showed annual scaled quail population trends in New Mexico averaged -2.10, with a trend of -5.78 from 2003–2013. Populations boomed in 2014–2015, with 2015 resulting in the highest call count index since species surveying commenced. The majority of this population boom occurred across the eastern portion of New Mexico into west Texas. Breeding bird survey data on Gambel's quail suggest that average annual population trends are increasing at approximately +2.6 from 1996–2015, with a trend of +3.57 since 2005. Some quail research in progress include a study comparing habitat use and demography in two different habitat types on White Sands Missile Range and a study on scaled quail habitat management and thermal ecology to inform range management decisions within the shinnery oak/mesquite plant communities of New Mexico.

Oklahoma: Quail harvest numbers were down in 2016-17, as conditions were very dry. The state is starting a new research project looking at detailed habitat use by putting GPS transmitters on quail in eastern Oklahoma. Biologists fielded a number of calls on eyeworm this year. The state discussed how we have limited evidence to indicate that eyeworm is negatively affecting populations. Quail Forever has helped collaborate on some small habitat projects throughout the state.

Oregon: Dave Budeau retired last year, and Mikal Cline will be replacing him.

Texas: Air rifle industry made a request to legalize air rifles for all species. The regulation states “projectile”, so air shotguns should not be legal, as they fire multiple projectiles. Continue to hear information about California quail being translocated to Texas. Translocation requests have been coming into Texas, so having a finalized translocation document would be ideal. Sonora University has been collecting hunter harvest Montezuma quail across their range for genetic analysis and crop content study, so they'll be extending this work into Texas. Finishing up the research of the Montezuma quail monitoring/occupancy study on the Edwards Plateau, and phase 2 will be to deploy GPS transmitters on birds for specific habitat use. Funded a project on scaled quail using GIS and historic distribution mapping, would like to continue this with some on the ground research.

Utah: Annual waterhole counts show that Gambel's quail populations have remained relatively stable, and have not been impacted as severely as expected by wildfires throughout their range in Utah. Scaled quail populations have persisted from the 2015-16 releases. Utah continues to translocate urban California quail,

though only 150 were moved in 2017-18. California quail harvest has been relatively stable over the last 8 year, while Gambel's quail harvest has had a slight up-tick the last year. California quail harvest was approximately 5,739 quail by 1,378 hunters in 2016, and Gambel's quail harvest was 4,299 quail by 539 hunters. Skidmore thesis was recently published: "Ecology of Gambel's quail in relation to water and fire in Utah's Mojave Desert."

Washington: Washington recently hired a new upland biologist, Sarah Kindschuh.

BLM: BLM is looking at a technique to summarize the acres that the BLM has completed in habitat improvement, and to make this information more available to State Agencies. BLM has many systems that collect information on improvement projects, so they are working on a single system that will compile all the information from these individual systems.

USFS: The USFS has several national initiatives that provide funding, particularly through partnerships. These include Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Process, Joint Chiefs Initiative (working with NRCS treating public and private lands collectively), and Good Neighbor Authority (allows USFS to partner directly with State Agencies to treat lands in or around Forest Services properties).

8. Casey presented on the Interstate Quail Translocation Standards of Practice document the technical staff recently completed (found below). This document will provide guidance to individuals and agencies with an interest in moving birds between states. Some needs identified by the technical staff include:
 - a. Following discussions between state program leads, a formal letter of request should be submitted to the source State Agency
 - b. Translocations requests should contain a proposal with the following topics addressed
 - i. Translocation purpose
 - ii. Release site description
 - iii. Historic and current species densities
 - iv. Trapping/handling/translocation procedures
 - v. Disease/parasite testing to be conducted
 - vi. Proximity of release to domestic poultry operations
 - vii. Expected timeline
 - viii. Target numbers
 - ix. Previous translocation efforts
 - x. Monitoring protocols
 - c. Reporting Requirements
 - i. Numbers of translocated birds
 - ii. Capture/transport mortality
 - iii. Site fidelity of translocated birds
 - iv. Survival rates of translocated birds
 - v. Production rates of translocated birds
 - vi. Modifications from original proposal
 - vii. Evaluation of trap, transport, and release methods

viii. Results of disease screening

The WAFWA group was interested in moving forward with the document. The motion to send this draft to the Directors for review was moved and seconded, and passed by the group. The document will be presented for finalization at the Winter WAFWA Meeting. Scott Taylor did mention that other groups (Pheasant Tech Committee, NBCI, AFWA Resident Game Bird) will be interested in pushing similar documents forward, so a similar product may be coming from other groups soon.

9. Casey discussed the planned summary sheets the group will be working on this year. These sheets include individual species fact sheets, Montezuma quail habitat guidelines, hybrid information. One additional topic suggested by the Josh Avey was the biology behind harvest regulations.
10. Josh Avey mentioned it would be important for the group to look across the west and assess how different states deal with upland game birds. This would be a large scale look which could mean comparing methodologies (harvest and population surveys), and how we advertise small game hunting.
11. Casey mentioned the groups desire to pursue funding for a survey to more accurately identify small game hunters and the economics associated with their hunting activity. One option that the Technical Group discussed would be to pursue a multistate PR grant with other upland groups (Pheasant Tech Committee, NBCI).
12. 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 late-January or early-February, in SW New Mexico or SE Arizona.

Action Items:

1. Present the interstate translocation standards of practice document to the Directors. Upon their review, this will be approved at the WAFWA winter meeting.
2. Begin summary sheets: Individual quail information sheets, Montezuma quail habitat, biology behind harvest regulations.
3. Pursue funding for research on identifying small game hunters and the economics associated with their hunting activity

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30.

Western Quail Working Group

Inter-State Quail Translocation Standards of Practice

The Western Quail Working Group (WQWG) recognizes translocations of wild quail as a tool to enhance and restore populations, and where necessary for species-specific management, establish populations. This document has been developed to help guide quail managers with Standards of Practice for quail translocations and provide a feedback loop to the WQWG informing future decision making regarding quail populations and their translocation. Further research is required for Best Management Practices for the individual species. The three requirements for an inter-state quail translocation are:

1. Official Letter of Request
2. Proposal
3. Post-Release Reporting

Official letter of request

It is paramount that program leads from both the source and receiving state wildlife agencies be informed and involved in any interstate quail translocation. As such, an official letter of request for an interstate quail translocation should be sent to the source state wildlife agency if the request is from the program lead at the receiving agency. If the request is coming from another entity such as a Federal Agency, Non-Governmental Organization or private party, then the official letter of request should be sent to both the source and receiving state wildlife agencies with copies addressed to the program leads.

The official request letter needs to be sent far enough in advance of the desired translocation to allow adequate time for consideration, decision making, and logistical preparation. The additional time is necessary as some states require the requesting agency/entity to obtain permits (such as Scientific Collecting Permits or State Board of Agriculture Importation Permits) to perform work related to translocations which may have other reporting requirements in addition to those outlined in this policy.

Any requests for assistance from the source agency should be explicitly stated in the letter of request as well as the proposal. Once initial approval is granted a detailed proposal should be developed and given to the donor agency well in advance of proposed field work.

Proposal

The proposal for the translocation of wild quail should include enough detail to allow evaluation of all components of the project, including the impact to natural resources, animal welfare, and details about the release location. The proposal should include:

1. Purpose of the release – augment populations, introduction, reintroduction, other.
2. Release site description – including size of property or project area, historic habitat conditions, current habitat conditions, ownership, long-term management plans, connectivity, etc.
3. Historic and current density of the species at the proposed release site
4. Trapping / Handling / Release / Translocation procedures

5. Disease/parasite testing, response procedures, and disease risk analysis (see Disease and Parasite section)
6. Proximity of release to large domestic poultry or gamebird operations
7. Proposed source location/ownership
8. Expected timeline / multi-year request / timing of release
9. Target numbers/age ratio/sex ratio
10. Any previous translocation efforts/experience
11. Monitoring protocols

If information is insufficient for program leads to fully evaluate the project, project approval could face significant delays until concerns are addressed.

Disease and Parasite Requirements

The WQWG recognizes all states need for mandatory testing for poultry susceptible diseases. The National Poultry Improvement Plan is a voluntary program administered cooperatively by the USDA, various states, and the poultry industry since the 1930's. This plan specifies disease testing and monitoring for poultry, turkeys, waterfowl, and game birds. The program includes testing for *Salmonella pullorum* and *S. enteritidis*, avian influenza, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, *M. synoviae*, and *M. meleagridis*. Because of variations in state testing requirements, we also recommend testing for diseases and parasites specific to game birds and geographic area. This list may be amended or refined based on recommendations from the WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee. Diseases and pathogens to consider testing/screening for include, but are not limited to:

1. Salmonella – blood test
2. *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* and *M. synoviae* – blood test or oropharyngeal swabs
3. Avian influenza – blood test or oropharyngeal swabs
4. Quail bronchitis (adenovirus) – fecal or oropharyngeal swabs
5. Cryptosporidium - fecal
6. Coccidia – fecal
7. Capillaria (gapeworm) - fecal
8. *Trichomonas gallinae* – oropharyngeal swabs
9. Ulcerative enteritis/colitis (*Clostridium colinum*) – necropsy, anaerobic culture, fecal gram stain or pcr
10. Pox virus – physical exam
11. GI parasites - fecal
12. Inspection for other external parasites

With regard to parasites, it is recommended that a treatment be applied to kill or prevent parasites such as fleas, ticks, mites and worms to all birds being translocated.

Monitoring Requirements

As a condition of project approval, population monitoring will be required on all release sites for the duration of the project and a minimum of 3 years (possibly longer) post-translocation.

Monitoring must, at minimum, be sufficient to provide information on current population status (presence/absence at a minimum). Receiving agencies/entities are encouraged to incorporate research or monitoring that provide information on the demographics of the translocated population to inform trapping and release techniques.

Reporting Requirements

As a condition of project approval, annual progress reports will be required during the translocation project with a final report due 5 years following the final translocation. Annual reports should include information on:

1. Numbers/age ratio/sex ratio and location(s) of quail captured and released
2. Capture and transport mortality, carcass disposition
3. Site fidelity of translocated quail (if available)
4. Survival rates of translocated quail (if available)
5. Production rates of translocated quail (if available)
6. Modifications from original proposal
7. Evaluation of trap, transport and release methods
8. Results of disease screening (first annual report)

Final report should include the aforementioned information as well as:

1. Population status
2. Evaluation of the translocation effort
3. Habitat management/maintenance plans to ensure long-term success
4. Why translocation failed (if applicable)
5. Other lessons learned

Additional data or information may be requested by the program leads help guide future management decisions.

Program leads will provide an annual update on quail translocations to and from their respective states during the annual meeting of WQWG.