



WAFWA
Western Quail Working Group
Manhattan, Kansas, July 14, 2019
Meeting Minutes

1. Casey called the meeting to order at 8:05 A.M. and asked for attendee introductions. Thirteen individuals were in attendance.
2. A request was made to attendees for additional agenda items. None offered
3. A Western Quail Technical Staff meeting was held in Sonoita, Arizona, February 6-8, 2019.
 - a. Representatives from 10 states were present at the meeting (AZ, CA, ID, KS, NM, OK, OR, TX, UT, WA), along with individuals from PF/QF.
 - b. Robert brought up the Partners in Flight 2016 Continental Plan half-life analysis. Some things of note are that bobwhites are ranked the worst of the 24 “common birds in steep decline”. Scaled quail are ranked #1 of 86 on the PIF Species Watch List species. Of all 448 continental land birds evaluated by PIF, scaled quail and bobwhites are of highest concern on the species watch list. One day soon, we may consider a rangewide species plan for Scaled Quail. Another discussion point that was brought up was to have Joint Venture representation at the WQWG meetings.
 - c. The Group discussed needs that they would fulfilled by the plan or what they would like to work on as a group.
 - d. The Inter-state Translocation Position Statement and Guidelines will go to the Directors for approval this meeting.
 - e. The groups revisited the possibility a survey to more accurately identify small game hunters and the economics associated with their hunting activity. Discussions with the National Wild Pheasant Coordinator and NBCI will be pursued before the AFWA Resident Game Birds Working Group.

4. Member Updates:

Arizona: There is a new research project on Gambel’s Quail translocation. This project will look into Best Management Practices for translocating Gambel’s quail. Birds will be moved from golf courses to public lands. This project will look at the population responses for translocated birds and birds that may have been present where birds were released.

The Department is still moving California quail on the Little Colorado River. There have been birds are detected in the area post-translocation. Though birds have been documented in subsequent years, no reproduction has been documented yet.

The Department tested the Texas callback method for Mearn’s Quail. There was no success during the survey time selected that ran in Texas. Additional survey efforts had better response when humidity levels were higher.

There is continued habitat work (mechanical grubbing) in Scaled Quail range. The Department is using flush counts to survey response of birds. There may be a slight positive response to the treatment, but it is too early to tell.

California: The Department is still using BBS data to assess quail population trends in the different regions. Using weighted averages of bird densities from BBS routes to make new distribution maps. The Department is currently analyzing the 2016 and 2017 population trend data. There was a slight downward trend in birds per route for California quail and Mountain quail, and a slight upward trend for Gambel's quail birds per route.

Looking to conduct another Harvest Survey once the 2016-2017 survey results are available online. Phase 3 of nonlead ammo implementation went into effect July 1st.

Current research includes:

- Distance sampling on Carrizo Ecological Reserve
- Wing barrels on Knoxville Wildlife Area
- Potential to assess distance sampling on Knoxville as well

Through collaborations with non-government organizations, there are several habitat projects occurring in quail habitat in the state. A couple of these include forest thinning on Eldorado National Forest, and native grassland restoration on Knoxville WMA.

Idaho: The Department is making updates to the Upland Game Management Plan. This document is the overall directive document for upland game from 2019-2024. As for quail management, the Department would like to better define the distribution of Mountain Quail in Idaho.

The Department conducted an email survey to assess public opinion. There were 70,000 surveys sent, with 17,000 respondents. About 50% of the responses were from upland game hunters.

Kansas: Scaled quail have a limited distribution in the SW region of the state. There are no scaled quail specific surveys, but they are documented on the summer roadside survey. In the Southern High Plains, quail densities decreased by 33% following a very dry winter and excessive summer precipitation. The regional quail hunter effort and success dropped in the Southern High Plains in 2017-18 season.

Biologists submitted a federal aid grant to partner with OSU to evaluate shrub cover and artificial structure on overwinter survival

New Mexico: Quail number and harvest in the 2018-2019 season dropped significantly compared to the previous years. There were a lower number of harvest reports filed and birds/hunter. This has been decreasing since the peak in 2015.

Oklahoma State University is in its second year of a study documenting response of scaled quail to prescribed fire and mesquite removal. In 2018, 86 birds were collared and 50 were marked into nesting season. There were 18 nests documented. In 2019, 103 birds were captured and 64 were marked into nesting season. There were 28 nests documented.

Oklahoma: Quail numbers were down this past year. A snapshot of weather conditions looked really good for the year, but one of the issues was over abundant rain in a short time period.

The Department has converted to a new digital license data base. This could make it easier to collect hunter harvest data.

The Department conducts an annual research hunt on one of the Wildlife Management Areas. The information collected includes coveys flushed per hour, the habitat use, and the bird's crop content.

There is new quail research in eastern Oklahoma. The Department assessed different GPS transmitters for quail. The Department will be deploying 60 GPS transmitters for on four WMAs for two years.

The Department has new publications coming out. These include:

- Plant foods for quail
- Research summary on Quail in Oklahoma just came out which includes: response to habitat treatments, nest site selection information, response of birds to temperature, bird interactions to freestanding water, and response of birds to energy development.

Oregon: Oregon has wrapped up the translocation project moving Mountain Quail from the core population out to Eastern Oregon. The last translocation was 150 birds, which brought the total up to 2,500 mountain quail moved in the state. Oregon has translocated 100 Mountain quail a year for the last two years to Nevada

There have been fires across Mountain Quail range, with the states severe drought. Mountain quail seem to be responding positively to post-fire habitat.

Oregon is moving to an electronic licensing system, so there is a possibility that changes could be made to the hunter harvest survey. Currently a landline phone survey, which could be targeting a specific population subset.

Texas: Chestnut-bellied scaled quail populations are still struggling after populations dipped in 2005. A researcher from Texas A&M- Kingsville hypothesized that exotic grasses (Buffel, Lehman, Guinea) may be fragmenting habitat. The Department is starting a research project with Texas Tech looking at the Demographics of Scaled Quail in the Rolling Plains. Additionally, there is a new biologist who started in North Texas focusing on Quail.

The Department is working with Dr. Alberto Macias-Duarte on genetics of Montezuma quail in the two Texas populations. This research will compare the Hill Country and Trans-Pecos populations. The research project on Montezuma survey techniques concluded, but the results indicate this is not a good index technique, but it is good for surveying presence-absence.

Utah: Harvest for both California and Gambel's quail was up in 2017, even though California quail hunter numbers were down slightly. For California quail there were 1,223 hunters that harvested 6,137 birds, and for Gambel's Quail there were 847 hunters that harvested 6,345 birds.

The Department continues to trap and translocate urban California quail. 152 birds were moved to two locations in the 2018-19 season. The Department is trying to narrow the focus of the releases to areas that have undergone habitat treatments

Washington: Quail harvest is down slightly from 2015 to 2017. The Department is considering deploying wing barrels to better estimate mountain quail harvest and gather some population information. Additionally, if possible, the state would like to experiment with additional questions to improve hunter harvest estimations

The Department is looking for a survey technique to document mountain quail on the landscape before attempting any future translocations.

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).

Region 6 Update. There are currently 5 CLFRA projects, and 7 Joint Chief projects. Some projects include: Umatilla National Forest- 1,300 acres of riparian restoration annually; Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area- 1,200 acres of oak savannah restoration annually; Umpqua National Forest- 1,200 acres conifer thinning; Crooked River National Grasslands and Deschutes National Forest- 20,000 acres of upland habitat improvement.

Quail Forever: In the central US, a NFWF grant is helping expand capacity, including 16 people to work on bobwhite habitat restoration on private lands. There is a new biologist in west Texas, focusing on grassland bird species and quail. In south central Texas and western Oklahoma, there are new Farm Bill Biologists. PF/QF is also working with Oaks and Prairies JV and Gulf Coast JV to help deliver incentive programs on grasslands. There are several new positions in the west. In Oregon, there is a collaborative position between the BLM, IMWJV, and ODFW working on the NEPA process, in Nevada there is a new position that will lead the BLM's Outcome Based Grazing Initiative, in Craig, CO, there is a new Sage Grouse Initiative Position, and in Arizona, a new position focusing on Riparian habitat restoration.

PF/QF is looking at possibilities for working with all land management agencies, in addition to private land owners. The organization will be looking for landscape level conservation opportunities, regardless of landownership. There may be potential for collaboration on species other than pheasants and quail

There is a New Farm Bill, which will provide some great opportunities that could be used for habitat improvements in quail range.

PF/QF Chapters have been extremely supportive of R3 efforts. PF/QF would like to highlight and promote the hunting opportunities that are available in the West.

5. Al Eiden mentioned that National Parks in the eastern US are considering options for allowing hunting. Western states should consider potentials for working with NPS for opening areas for quail hunting.
6. **Future projects include:**
 - a. Finish Western Quail Hybrid information sheet
 - b. Finish individual species summary sheets
 - c. Create habitat management guidelines for Montezuma Quail and Mountain Quail
 - d. Species actions plans for Scaled quail and Mountain quail including more descriptive species management guidelines with additional research needs
 - e. Create fact sheet on impact of harvest to quail populations

Meeting was adjourned at 9:10.

Appendix 1



Western Quail Working Group

Inter-state Quail Translocation Position Statement and Guidelines

The Western Quail Working Group (WQWG) was established and approved through the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) in July 2009. Members of the WQWG include representatives from state and federal wildlife agencies who are knowledgeable about these quail species and have management responsibilities within their respective jurisdiction, or in the case of the federal agencies, have land management responsibilities and oversight. The WQWG is uniquely positioned to offer leadership and guidance for restoration projects, including translocation of wild quail species.

Position Statement

It is the position of the WQWG that reintroduction, augmentation or introduction of wild populations of western quail species through translocation—under appropriate circumstances described herein—can be an effective population restoration tool to achieve biological success. We are not generally supportive of the introduction of non-endemic wild quail species. Our position is that a wild quail translocation project (a single property or cooperative of properties) is ultimately biologically successful if a self-sustaining wild population persists for greater than 10 years after translocation efforts have ended. Long-term performance that exceeds this minimum threshold is preferred, such as higher population levels, and/or geographic expansion of the population beyond initial project boundaries.

Guidelines

The movement of wildlife across state lines falls under the purview of state wildlife agencies. Furthermore, states may have their own legal mandates or guidelines more restrictive than those described herein. This document has been developed solely to provide guidance to resource managers considering quail translocations and to create a mechanism to inform future decision making regarding quail population management. Further research is needed to establish translocation Best Management Practices specific to individual western quail species. The recommended protocol for inter-state quail translocation includes 3 major categories:

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

Official letter of request

In order to avoid potential miscommunication, it is paramount program leads from both the source and requesting state wildlife agencies be informed and involved early in the process. The submission of an official letter of request for interstate quail translocation, sent by the requesting state program lead to the source state wildlife agency director facilitates this process. 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 source and requesting state wildlife agencies directors with copies addressed to the program leads. The official request letter and preliminary proposal need to be sent needs to be sent far enough in advance of the desired translocation to allow adequate time for consideration, decision making, and logistical preparation. 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) or other reporting requirements to conduct translocations. Any requests for assistance from the source agency should be explicitly stated in the letter of request and the proposal. Once initial approval is granted, a detailed proposal should be developed and provided to the source agency well in advance of proposed field work.

Proposal

Translocation proposals 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. A well-designed proposal includes the following elements:

1. Purpose of the release – reintroduction, augmentation, or introduction into suitable habitat
2. Justification for release – including a habitat evaluation or habitat suitability index
3. Release site description – including size of property or project area, historic habitat conditions, current habitat conditions, ownership, long-term management plans, connectivity, etc.
4. Reintroduction/restocking - Historic and current density of the species at the proposed release site
5. Translocation Methods -trapping/handling/ transport /release
6. *Disease/parasite testing, response procedures, and disease risk analysis (see below)*
7. Proximity of release to large domestic poultry or gamebird operations
8. Proposed source location/ownership
9. Expected timeline/multi-year request/timing of release
10. Target numbers/age ratio/sex ratio
11. Any previous translocation efforts/experience
12. *Monitoring protocols(see below)*

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

Disease and Parasite Considerations

The WQWG recognizes the need for mandatory testing for poultry-specific diseases. The National Poultry Improvement Plan is a voluntary program administered cooperatively by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, various states, and the poultry industry since the 1930s. 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 areas. 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

Monitoring Protocols

Each source state may have certain conditions of project approval including, but not limited to, population and habitat monitoring. Interim measures of progress over at least 5 years should include, at a minimum, annual monitoring to document presence/absence. Other measures may include:

- Estimates of survival and carry-over of translocated birds, and overall population status.
- Documentation of reproduction by translocated birds.
- Active habitat management to maintain enough area to support a viable population.

Requesting agencies/entities are encouraged to incorporate research or monitoring efforts that provide information on the demographics of the translocated population to inform trapping and release techniques.

Post-release Reporting

Similar to monitoring, each source state may have different conditions for project approval. The WQWG suggest the following key elements be included in annual and final reports:

Annual reports:

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
4. Survival rates of translocated quail
5. Production rates of translocated quail
6. Modifications from original proposal
7. Evaluation of trap, transport and release methods
8. Results of disease screening (first annual report)

Final report - 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 program leads to 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.

References:

Western Quail Working Group:

https://www.wafwa.org/committees_groups/western_quail_working_group

National Poultry Improvement Plan:

<https://www.poultryimprovement.org/documents/ProgramStandardsJanuary2017.pdf>

WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee:

https://www.wafwa.org/committees_groups/committees/wildlife_health_committee/