



WAFWA
Western Quail Working Group
Virtual Meeting, July 09, 2020
Meeting Minutes

1. Casey called the meeting to order at 1:05 P.M. 14 individuals were in attendance.
2. The meeting minutes from the 2019 WAFWA meeting were approved.
3. A Western Quail Technical Staff meeting was held in Medford, Oregon, December 3-6, 2019.
 - a. Representatives from 11 states were present at the meeting (AZ, CA, ID, KS, NV, NM, OK, OR, TX, UT, WA), along with individuals from PF/QF and USFS.
 - b. John Alexander from Klamath Bird Observatory came and gave a presentation on species habitat modeling using bird presence data.
 - c. The USFS provided information on landscape level conservation programs currently available, and some of the projects that are currently active in the Northwest under these programs.
 - d. Julia Burco from ODFW discussed health screenings and disease concerns when translocating birds
 - e. Some adhoc groups were established to discussed individual species needs. These include a Scaled Quail Group, a Montezuma Quail Group, and a Mountain Quail group. These group discussions were very favorable and will increase in importance in subsequent meetings.

4. Member State Highlights:

Arizona: The research project on Gambel's Quail translocation is in its second year. This project is looking at Best Management Practices for translocating Gambel's quail from urban areas to public lands. In both years and on both sites, reproduction by translocated birds has been relatively low. Survival has been higher on the northern study site compared to the southern.

There was a decent number of Montezuma quail wings submitted in the harvest barrels this year, and a good proportion of the wings were juvenile birds. So even though there was a less than ideal monsoon, there still was decent production.

California: Weather has been mixed across the state in 2020, so it will be hard to generalize species populations trends. The Mojave did get more rain this spring, so it could be a fair year for Gambel's quail.

The Department is still using BBS data to assess quail population trends in the different regions. The BBS surveys were canceled in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, so there will be a missing year of data in some of the future models.

California set up a couple wing barrels at one of the WMAs. For the California quail wings collected in 2018-19, the age ratio was 2.64 juv:adult. This is similar to the ratio observed the previous year before. This somewhat low reproduction effort may

have to do with a burn on the site in 2018, and reproductive success may change in the future.

Idaho: The Department finalized revisions to the Upland Game Management Plan this year. The last update to the plan was in 1990. The updates identify three main priorities to address statewide: improve population and harvest monitoring; focus on habitat improvement and management; and improve hunting access.

Idaho currently estimates harvest through a mail survey that is sent to a random sample of license buyers with a telephone follow-up. The survey goes to all game hunting license holders. There is a fairly high standard error related to hunter/harvest estimates, but averages can be presented. There was a consistent harvest estimation technique over the 10-year period, with varying methodology prior to this time period. Over the last 10 years, there were approximate 8,700 quail hunters in Idaho, who spent 45,100 days afield harvesting 77,600 birds annually. The average daily harvest is 8.9 birds/hunter and 1.74 birds/day.

Kansas: Scaled quail have a limited distribution in the SW region of the state. There are no scaled quail specific surveys, but they are included in the quail estimate from the summer roadside survey. In the Southern High Plains, quail densities decreased by 17% this year following extremely heavy precipitation.

KDWPT is working with Oklahoma State University to evaluate the impact of shrub cover and artificial structures on overwinter survival and behavior of scaled quail.

New Mexico: Quail number and harvest in the 2019-2020 season dropped 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.

The Graduate student from Oklahoma State University finished her thesis documenting response of scaled quail to prescribed fire and mesquite removal. Her research indicates that birds in New Mexico's eastern plains select for nest sites that were significantly cooler during daylight hours than random sites.

Nevada: The northcentral portion of the state is back in moderate to several drought which may impact California quail populations. Southern Nevada has had more favorable weather conditions, so it may be a good Gambel's quail year.

There was another translocation of mountain quail from Oregon to Nevada. Forty birds were released in the Fish Creek Mountains, the other 88 birds were held overwinter and released them in the Snake Range.

A proposal was submitted to the Upland Game Stamp Program to develop a forecasting tool for upland game populations. Harvest data, aerial chukar surveys, and environmental covariates would be input into the model to see if predications could be made on population trends. This may be something that may be of interest to other states in the future.

Oklahoma: Total quail numbers were up slightly in 2019. Unfortunately, large portions of the panhandle are now in drought, so it may not be a great scaled quail year. There are still some reports of broods coming in though.

The Department has intensified the data collection on their wing envelopes. Some of the information now collected included hunter zip code (for human dimensions questions) and email for additional surveys. Additionally, the Department is able to predict peak hatch dates on the WMAs where wings are collected.

The Department is collaborating on the Southeast cooperative wildlife disease study at University of Georgia. This study is identifying the proportion and types of parasites present in quail populations.

The GPS telemetry study on wildlife management areas has been going well. As of December 2019, there were still 39 birds on air. The GPS units take 18 points per day per bird. Data from this study will be used to assess quail fine scale habitat use, and how some of the landscape treatments (fire and timing of fire, mastication, pipeline and oil development) impact quail. There are also concurrent bug and plant studies in these areas to get a big picture of bird site selection.

Oregon: Production surveys indicate that in 2019 California quail were down and Mountain quail were up (though not many Mountain quail are detected on the surveys so this confidence interval is wide). California quail harvest year has been better expected based on production survey. There are still some anecdotal observations submitted on Mountain Quail in areas where they have been translocated, but this effort has been reduced some as the birds have become established in these areas.

Oregon recently moved to an electronic licensing system. Currently the hunter harvest survey is a landline phone survey of 1% of upland validation holder. There may be discussions in the future about using alternative technologies to conduct this survey.

Texas: The Department is working with a couple researchers to assess the genetics of Montezuma quail in Texas. Researchers at Perdue documented genetic erosion in Texas' Montezuma quail (harvested in the Trans-Pecos). The Department has authorized the harvest of 5 birds in the Texas Hill Country for genetic analysis. This population has been isolated for a long time, and surveys indicate population numbers are fairly low. For the first time ever, a Montezuma quail was harvested on the Edwards Plateau in July 2020.

The Department is starting a research project with Texas Tech looking at the demographics of Scaled Quail in the Rolling Plains in stable and unstable populations. They are also taking high resolution imagery from drones and they will use this imagery to compare the GPS locations to get very fine scale habitat use information. 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.

Utah: Most of Utah is in some measure of drought in 2020. In Gambel's quail range, conditions are only abnormally dry, so there still may be decent reproduction this

year. The central portion of the state is in a much worse drought condition, so wildlands California quail may struggle this year.

Harvest for both California and Gambel's quail was down in 2018. For California quail there were 1,111 hunters that harvested 2,342 birds, and for Gambel's Quail there were 869 hunters that harvested 2,392 birds.

The Department continues to trap and translocate urban California quail. 248 birds were moved to three locations in the 2018-19 season. There appears to be some breeding success of translocated birds in 2 of the 3 release sites.

Washington: Quail harvest is up 31% from 2017 to 2018. Almost all quail harvest occurred in eastern Washington. The average number of birds per hunter is 8 and has been since 2000.

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).

Quail Forever:

Like many of the Conservation NGOs, PF/QF has taken a hit from Covid. Many spring banquets have been postponed to the fall. The Organization is hoping they'll be able to hold fall banquets, but there are some contingency plans in case there are further widescale banquet cancellations.

PF/QF is focusing on grants and partnerships and implementing habitat programs where they are available across the west. The organization will be looking for landscape level conservation opportunities, regardless of landownership and species. One example is in Idaho, there was a NFWF grant to focus on sagebrush work in the Owyhee mountains.

PF/QF has been extremely supportive of recruiting youth hunters and getting folks outdoors. The R3 initiative is gaining steam, and the Organization is excited to partner with states on these efforts. PF/QF would like to highlight and promote the hunting opportunities that are available in the West.

Future projects include:

- a. Compile information on State population and harvest monitoring techniques. Discuss potential options for standardizing surveys or data obtained from these surveys.

- b. Create habitat management guidelines documents for Montezuma Quail (provide a draft by mid-Winter Meeting)
- c. Create habitat management summary and guidelines for Mountain Quail
- d. Create a spreadsheet that compiles existing Mountain quail survey techniques and data sets
- e. Review research needs identified for Scaled quail in the Western quail management plan

Meeting was adjourned at 2:40.