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## CKWRI Quail eNews

News from the Richard M. Kleberg, Jr. Center for Quail Research at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute



**Richard M. Kleberg, Jr. Center for Quail Research**

**Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute**

**CKWRI Quail eNews - March/April 2012**

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has requested our help! Bobwhite quail populations have declined across their range in Texas and the United States. Losses of habitat, habitat fragmentation, and to a lesser extent climatic conditions, are the primary causes for bobwhite quail declines. Texas Parks and Wildlife is attempting to measure the impact of bobwhite quail declines on hunting and harvest rates and practices by surveying bobwhite quail hunters via the Internet.

We have provided the link to the Texas Parks and Wildlife survey in this newsletter. If you are interested in assisting in the research developed and implemented by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, please use the following link. This research is not associated with the sponsor of this newsletter.

<https://dmz-iissql.tpwd.state.tx.us/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=ml0Hln9>

In this issue, graduate student Katherine Miller summarizes her thoughts on the Quail VII conference held in January in Tucson, Arizona.

My Perspective on Quail VII

By

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In early January, most folks return from their holiday travels, unpack, and turn their minds to the new year. Quail biologists instead embarked on another trip, this time to southeastern Arizona and the Seventh National Quail Symposium. The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute was represented by Dr. Leonard Brennan, Dr. Fidel Hernández,

*Providing the science  
behind quail  
conservation and  
management.*

**March/April 2012**

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Dr. Randy DeYoung, and 6 graduate students. We returned with our heads full of information, and our hearts full of hope, for the plight of quail across the United States.

A conference has many activities, and many biologists eagerly await the evening social, where they will see colleagues and swap stories. Over the course of the evening socials, hosted by the Arizona Game Rangers, I heard stories of recent quail and pheasant hunts, research ideas, and concerns over the struggle of limited funds, all underlined by a common concern: How can we better manage our quail? Being somewhat of an introvert, I tire of these social events quickly. I enjoy flipping through the schedule of talks, circling the ones that look the most interesting, or applicable to my research. Afterwards, I curled up with some coffee and the schedule, planning ahead for the talks.

Most conferences have a plenary session, a series of talks that summarize the theme for the conference. For Quail VII, the plenary was themed "Sustaining Wild Quail Through Conservation Planning". Topics in the plenary session ranged from the Western Quail Management Plan and the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative to navigating the political processes for quail management. Through these talks a central theme emerged: we know that our quail populations are declining, we know that we need more research to understand the causes and impacts of these declines, and conservation of these populations requires on-going cooperation among biologists, hunters, landowners, and politicians.

Usually, talks and posters that summarize research form the core of such scientific conferences. This was certainly the case at Quail VII. Northern bobwhite talks were grouped into sessions: brood ecology, range-wide population ecology and management, habitat ecology (range-wide and the Midwest), habitat management and planning, restoration, artificial propagation and nutrition, abundance estimation techniques, and depredation. Other categories included Montezuma quail ecology and management, western quail ecology and management, hunting effects and economics, quail habitat ecology, and quail reproduction and survival. Throughout the conference, researchers presented posters on their work with quail, from genetic structure, age ratios, sustained-yield harvest, and public land programs for northern bobwhite, phylogeography and survey indices for scaled quail, masked bobwhite recovery efforts, and pairing and reproductive success for California-Gambel's quail hybrids. Poster sessions and presentations provide an opportunity for researchers to meet and exchange ideas on various research projects.

Of the 77 papers and posters presented at Quail VII, 17 (22%) were from Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute. A list of these papers is provided below:

1. Brennan, L. A. Conference Summary and Concluding Remarks: Are We Whistling Past the Graveyard?
2. DeYoung, R. W., E. M. Wehland, D. L. Williford, A. Zamorano, J. P. Sands, L. A. Brennan, F. Hernandez, S. J. DeMaso, and R. M. Perez. Genetic Structure and Diversity in South Texas Bobwhites: Implications for Conservation (Ph.D. – Williford, M. S. – Wehland, Undergraduate – Zamorano)
3. Grahmann, E. D., M. Hehman, T. E. Fulbright, and F. Hernandez. Effects of Patch Burning and Grazing Exotic Grass Monocultures on Northern Bobwhite Habitat and Productivity. (Ph.D. – Grahmann)
4. Hernandez, F., C. J. Parent, I. C. Trewella and Eric D. Grahmann. The Forgotten Quail Decline: The Plight of Scaled Quail in Texas. (Ph.D. – Parent and Grahmann, M.S. – Trewella)
5. Kuvlesky, W. P. Jr., L. A. Brennan, T. E. Fulbright, F. Hernandez, S. J. DeMaso, J. P. Sands, R. M. Perez, and J. B. Hardin. Impacts of Invasive Exotic Grasses on Quail of Southwestern Rangelands: A decade of Progress? (Ph.D. – Sands)
6. Larson, J. A., T. E. Fulbright, L. A. Brennan, F. Hernandez and F. C. Bryant. Preference and Nutrition of Quail Breeder 16, Common Agricultural Feeds and a Mix of Native Seeds as Bobwhite Food. (M.S. – Larson)
7. Miller, K. S., L. A. Brennan, R. W. DeYoung, F. Hernandez and X. B. Wu. Northern Bobwhite Population Structure and Diversity in Texas and the Great Plains. (Ph.D. –

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**CKWRI Quail eNews:**

**Winner of the Outstanding  
Electronic Media  
Publication Award from the  
Texas Chapter of The  
Wildlife Society, February  
2011.**



- Miller)
8. Parent, C. J., F. Hernandez, D. B. Wester and F. C. Bryant. Temporal and Spatial Trends in Northern Bobwhite Survival and Nest Success. (Ph.D. – Parent)
  9. Sands, J. P., S. J. DeMaso, L. A. Brennan, D. L. Williford, R. W. DeYoung, E. M. Wehland, F. Hernandez and K. S. Miller. Application of Metapopulation Theory to Northern Bobwhite Conservation. (Ph.D. – Sands, Williford, and Miller)
  10. Sands, J. P., M. J. Schnupp, T. W. Tienert, S. J. DeMaso, F. Hernandez, L. A. Brennan, D. Rollins and R. M. Perez. Field Application of Sustained-yield Harvest Management for Northern Bobwhites in Texas. (Ph.D. – Sands, M.S. – Schnupp and Tienert)
  11. Sands, J. P., A. N. Tri, L. A. Brennan, F. Hernandez, S. J. DeMaso, and R. M. Perez. Northern Bobwhite Age Ratios and Productivity at the Individual Property Scale in South Texas. (Ph.D. – Sands, M.S. – Tri)
  12. Trewella, I. C. , C. J. Parent, F. Hernandez and F. C. Bryant. Spatial Analysis of Predator Abundance and Northern Bobwhite Nest Success in Southern Texas. (M.S. – Trewella)
  13. Tri, A. N., F. Hernandez, D. G. Hewitt, W. P. Kuvlesky, Jr. and L. A. Brennan. Effects of a Commercial Pelleted Ration on Wild Bobwhite Nesting and Harvest Demographics. (M.S. – Tri)
  14. Tri, A. N., F. Hernandez, D. G. Hewitt, W. P. Kuvlesky, Jr. and L. A. Brennan. Comparison of the Effects of Two Commercial Game Bird Feeds on Captive Northern Bobwhite Chick Growth Rates. (M.S. – Tri)
  15. Villareal, S. M., A. M. Fedynich, L. A. Brennan, and D. Rollins. Three-year Study on the Parasitic Eyeworm *Oxyspiura petrowi* in Northern Bobwhites from the Rolling Plains. (M.S. – Villareal)
  16. Williford, D. L., R. W. DeYoung, L. A. Brennan, F. Hernandez and R. L. Honeycutt. Phylogeography of the Scaled Quail (Ph.D. – Williford)
  17. Williford, D. L., R. W. DeYoung, L. A. Brennan, F. Hernandez and R. L. Honeycutt. Phylogeography of the Bobwhites (Ph.D. – Williford)

The conference ended with concluding remarks by Dr. Leonard Brennan, “Are we whistling past the graveyard?”, summarizing the challenges of optimism as we struggle to save this group of game birds. During the banquet, Dave Brown, Dr. Fred Guthery, and John Roseberry were recognized for their scientific contributions that support foundations of quail conservation. Biologists also paused to remember Walter Rosene (1912-2005) and John A. Crawford (1946-2010), biologists who made significant strides in our understanding of quail biology and management.

One of the highlights of such conferences is the field trips. The Safari Club International graciously hosted us as we toured their wildlife museum. Then on Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, the graduate students woke early for a tour of southeastern Arizona grasslands. Our first stop was Gardner Canyon, in the Coronado National Forest, where management focuses on Montezuma quail habitat, and hunting remains good for this elusive species. We met Dr. Fidel Hernández, who had been up even earlier, searching for turkey with Arizona Game and Fish biologists.





Figure 1: Gardner Canyon's grassy brushland habitat (Miller 2012).



Figure 2: Richie Sinclair, Ian Trewella, Chad Parent, and Dr. Hernández listen in as Kirby Bristow extols the management of Montezuma quail (Miller 2012).

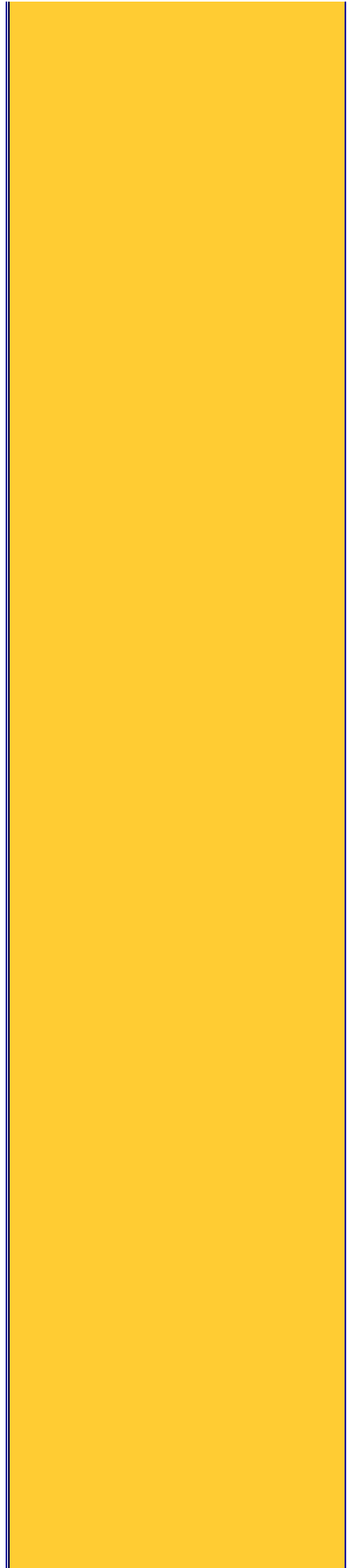






Figure 3: Chad Parent takes an opportunity to study a Mexican jay as Ian Trewella consults his bird guide (Miller 2012).



Figure 4: Healthy grasslands have a diversity of grass species; Richie Sinclair and Chad Parent discuss this particular grass (Miller 2012).

From there we travelled to Las Ciénegas National Conservation Area, where restored



grasslands support scaled quail, American pronghorn, and prairie-dogs.



Figure 5: Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, a restored grassland important for scaled quail, has the Santa Ritas as a backdrop (Miller 2012).



Figure 6: Kristan Jenschke demonstrates the importance of cover for wildlife.

I enjoyed the stop in Tombstone for lunch and a quick tourist's jaunt, particularly because I am a native of Arizona and I was able to see this historical town through the eyes of my colleagues who had never been there. After Tombstone, we jumped back in the van and headed to Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area, operated by Arizona Game and Fish Department. This restored grassland provides habitat for quail and other ground-nesting birds in the summer, but a winter visit such as ours provided viewing opportunities for sandhill cranes, numerous duck species, and even American bittern.



Figure 7: It was a cool day, so a purchase of a poncho came in handy as we birded Whitewater Draw (Miller 2012).





Figure 8: Whitewater Draw, a vital grassland for summer breeding birds, provides a source of water for wintering waterfowl (Miller 2012).



Figure 9: Sandhill Cranes rise in flight over Whitewater Draw (Williford 2012).

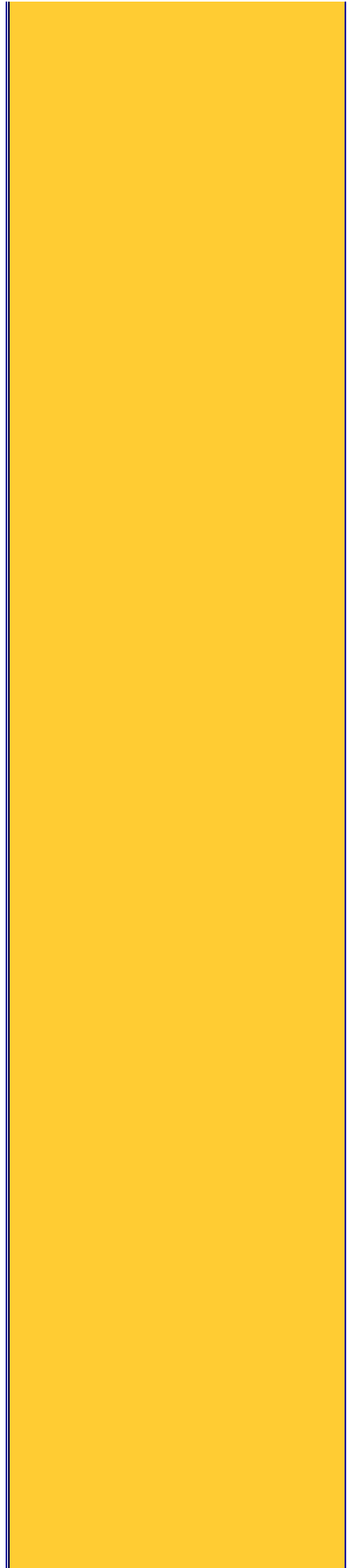






Figure 10: Whitewater Draw provides habitat for many waterbirds, including these cinnamon teal, northern shoveler, and American coot (Williford 2012).



Figure 11: Whitewater Draw's appeal is not only for waterbirds: vesper sparrows are just one species of sparrow we found foraging in the grasslands (Williford 2012).

Once or twice in my professional career, I've been asked to justify the costs for attending a conference. For some reason, "it's fun" doesn't cut it. Conferences are fun, but for me that enjoyment is nestled in a deeper understanding and appreciation for life-long learning. There is an understanding that learning doesn't stop once you have a degree (or two) to follow your name. Rather, we continue to seek new information because we understand that both wildlife and human populations change over time, and what may have been applicable for management 50 years ago may or may not work today. Conferences also offer us the

chance to meet with other professionals who share a passion for wildlife conservation and exchange research and funding ideas. It is also a way for us to represent our institutions of higher learning and research, like Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, and show the public the fruits of their continued support for our research. Conferences like Quail VII are a critical part of a wildlife professional's career, and I am already looking forward to the next one!

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*The mission of the Richard M. Kleberg, Jr. Center for Quail Research is to develop a scientific basis for the sustainable management and harvest of wild quail populations throughout South Texas and elsewhere.*



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