

# Quail surveys suggest uncertain prospects heading into season opener

Bobwhite and scaled quail populations continue to battle against drought conditions across Texas as quail season opens statewide Oct. 29. This means hunting opportunities and success will vary throughout the state.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) biologists completed their annual Quail Roadside Survey period in August, covering more than 3,300 road miles to gather data. Reports of habitat and range conditions ran the gamut for bobwhite quail, but a consistent thread was a decline in habitat quality going into late summer. Outside of a handful of counties in South Texas, bobwhites were few and far between.

“The lone bright spot again this year was the South Texas Plains, the only bobwhite region in the state to see an increase in recorded abundance,” said John McLaughlin, Upland Game Bird Program Leader for TPWD. “With a grain of salt, the number of bobwhites observed per route was up from 3.1 to 5.3, but still below the 15-year mean of 9.0. These numbers will provide some comfort to Texas hunters, but the statewide outlook, including the Rolling Plains, again points to tough sledding in 2022.”

However, widespread rainfall throughout August and September could impact bird populations. According to McLaughlin, it is possible this late season moisture will improve opportunities for late season nesting, but it is unknown how well the broods will fair and what their contributions will be to the fall populations.

Scaled quail are better evolved to withstand drought than bobwhites but nonetheless also rely on timely rainfall in the spring and late summer to grow populations. There is some room for hope for good hunting conditions in the Trans-Pecos region thanks to some timely rain this year.

“The foundation on which these populations are built are habitat and annual rainfall, and there are two storylines for scaled quail in 2022: the Trans-Pecos, and everywhere else,” said McLaughlin. “The Trans-Pecos continues to be our top producing ecoregion for blue quail and will be one of the few places in the state with room for optimism this hunting season. The benefactor of widely dispersed habitat and timely rainfall this year, the outlook for far West Texas is more promising.

Last year, we observed a decline in scaled quail populations in the Trans-Pecos but the birds that did survive were enough to propel us into the 2022 nesting season and provide a reproductive spark, added McLaughlin.

“The average number of quail

observed per route was 13.1 this year, an increase from 4.3 in 2021,” said McLaughlin. “While still below our 15-year mean of 16.3, these results represent a shift in the right direction. Most other ecoregions experienced small gains or losses and were extensions of long-term trends.”

Unfortunately, hunting for northern bobwhite and scaled quail in other regions of the state could be a challenge. McLaughlin said a combination of low population numbers, variably poor habitat conditions and below-average rainfall has sunk populations into a hole which is proving hard to escape.

A regional breakdown of this year’s TPWD quail index survey for northern bobwhite and scaled quail, including highlights and prospects, is available online.

For county-specific regulations regarding upland game birds, along with information on means and methods, license requirements and more, consult the 2022-23 Outdoor Annual,

which was made possible in part by support from Chevy Silverado. Hunters can download the free Outdoor Annual mobile app for iOS and Android.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF), official nonprofit partner of TPWD, sponsors a quail conservation license plate to raise critical funding to enhance quail conservation efforts, including habitat, conservation and education. For just \$30, anyone can put one of these conservation license plates on their vehicle, motorcycle or trailer. For every license plate purchased, \$22 goes to TPWF to support quail conservation.

**TPWD Game Warden Field Notes**  
**Bee Careful!**

A swarm of bees attacked a rancher utilizing an open top bulldozer to clear brush from his property when he inadvertently ran over their hive. Unable to be removed from his vehicle, a ranch hand covered him in blankets and called emergency services for assistance. Supported by local

EMS, Sheriff’s Department, and Eldorado Volunteer Fire Department, Schleicher and Sutton County Game Wardens responded to the incident. The volunteer fire department sprayed down the area to remove some of the bees. One of the responding wardens, an avid beekeeper in his spare time, applied his knowledge to reach the rancher. Wearing his personal beekeeping suits, the wardens and sheriff were able to remove the man from the bulldozer. Since the area was inaccessible to EMS vehicles, the wardens cleared their truck and transported the severely stung operator to EMS vehicles who were waiting to take him to the hospital. He recovered from his injuries.

**Old Fishing Buddy**

Texas Game Wardens were patrolling for water safety and recreational fishing activity when they received information regarding a boat that potentially possessed over the daily bag

limit of red snapper. The Wardens located the unoccupied boat moored at a dock. Upon performing an inspection, twenty-one red snapper were found on board, exceeding the individual fishing limit. Wardens attempted to contact the occupants of the house where the boat was docked. After approximately thirty minutes of knocking, announcing, speaking with neighbors and attempting to call the suspect and his family members, an individual exited the residence. The suspect was immediately evasive when questioned about the red snapper in the boat. He stated that he had caught them with five other people but only provided one name. The Wardens contacted the individual who stated he had not talked to the suspect in fifteen years. The suspect admitted to going over his daily bag limit to the wardens. Seventeen red snappers were seized, and citations issued, along with civil restitution.



**Bronco Construction**

Oilfield ~ Pads ~ Roads ~ Brush Control  
~ Metal Buildings

**Bartley Murray**

|                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| (325) 468-2234 | 11993 Tennyson Rd. |
| (325) 234-6258 | Miles, Texas 76861 |



**PROPANE SERVICE**

Wheat Energy Services has recently purchased the propane operations of Askins Propane in Robert Lee/Bronte and will continue the Askins tradition of providing quality propane service in Coke, Nolan, and surrounding counties. Please give us a call or come see us for all of your delivered propane, propane cylinder fills, delivered fuels, or other related needs.

**PROPANE • TANKS • DIESEL  
GASOLINE • LUBRICANTS**

Robert Lee - 202 Commerce - (325) 453-2080  
Bronte - Highway 277 North  
Winters - 104 E. Parsonage - (325) 754-4555  
Abilene - 101 Locust - (325) 673-4613

[www.wheatenergy.net](http://www.wheatenergy.net) [dwheat@wheatenergy.net](mailto:dwheat@wheatenergy.net)

**BRONTE SUPERMARKET**

120 W. MAIN IN DOWNTOWN BRONTE

(325) 473-2065

*Monday, Tuesday, Sunday • 7 am - 9 pm*

*Wednesday - Saturday • 7 am - 10 pm*

*\* Fresh Meat \* Fresh Produce*

*\* Weekly Ads \* Hunting & Fishing*

*Licenses \* Smart Buys*

---

**ONE STOP SHOP FOR ALL YOUR GROCERY NEEDS! #shoplocal**