

Cliffhanger for Panhandle quail season, happy ending in South Texas

By Bill Miller
LONE STAR OUTDOOR NEWS

When there's good news and bad news, a lot of people prefer to hear the bad first.

Like the finale of a suspenseful television drama, the 2010-2011 Texas upland game season is set to end Feb. 27 with a West Texas cliffhanger.

Hunters on the Rolling Plains, along with quail researchers, are stumped over why they saw lots of coveys before the start of the season, but then most of them seemed to disappear.

This was supposed to be a great year for bobwhites and blue quail because abundant rainfall had set the stage for a rebound of the drought-stunted populations.

Not so, hunters lament.

"I hunted around Abilene and conditions were perfect — everyone felt really good in September," said Joe Crafton of Dallas.

But by October, he said, hunters noticed a dearth of quail. "And," he added, "in November and December, they were apoplectic."

Researchers suspect disease and they pledged to explore that hypothesis in the coming months. That's an important task, said the upland game program leader for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"We got lots of calls from people who said they had quail and then they sort of disappeared," said Robert Perez, the program leader.

"We don't know what, but something unusual happened."

Perez said TPWD would help the researchers as much as budget cuts will allow. The Texas Legislature is considering deep reductions for the agency.

But quail hunters are ready to join the effort.

Crafton, vice chairman of Park Cities Quail Coalition, said his group plans to donate \$2 million to the cause.

But it wouldn't be fair to say hunting in West Texas, and the Panhandle in particular, was completely bleak.

Ranches that managed quail habitat had birds.

Stephen Deane of Amarillo hunted in Donley and Briscoe counties, where the biggest problem seemed to be temperatures below freezing in early February.

"On a good day, I'd see about a covey an hour, usually with about 15-25 birds," Deane said. "I was real happy with it right up until this cold weather."

"Our hunting hasn't been superb, but it has been much better than last year and 100 percent better than the year before that."

"We just need another wet spring and I think it will be excellent."

As for the good news, there's no cliffhanger in South Texas, where bobwhites did achieve a modest population recovery.

"We got into tons of coveys," said Ken Burch of Houston of his weekend hunt in Duval County. "I'd say Friday we saw 15-20 coveys and Saturday was pretty much the same. Sunday morning, I'd say we probably got up eight or nine."

The 2010 rains had thoroughly fueled the habitat of the region, but recent freezes knocked down some of it, Burch said.

"There was lots of ground cover and it was very thick," he said. "It made retrieving very difficult. Second flushes were really difficult."

Nevertheless, Burch said his group downed 86 birds.

The good reports out of South Texas offer enthusiasm for next season, if nature cooperates with more rain, Perez said.

"Places where quail held on — that's where we see them recover best," he said.

MYSTERY: Hunters on the Rolling Plains are baffled why bobwhite quail suddenly disappeared in West Texas. But in South Texas, hunters are celebrating the little bird's rebound from years of damaging drought. Photo by David J. Sams, Lone Star Outdoor News.



Natives head home



PLENTY HERE: The Exotic Wildlife Association is hoping to send 24 Scimitar-horned oryx, like the one pictured above with hunter Gil McCoy, back to their native country of Senegal to bolster bloodlines in that country. Photo by Gil McCoy.

Ranchers of exotics sending oryx back to Senegal

By Conor Harrison
LONE STAR OUTDOOR NEWS

The Ingram-based Exotic Wildlife Association is in the final phase of a three-part project to repopulate Scimitar-horned oryx to their native country of Senegal in Northwest Africa.

Although there are more than 11,000 oryx in the state of Texas, the animals

are virtually extinct across their native range, with less than 25 animals reported in Senegal.

The main reason for repopulating the animals is to prevent inbreeding in the miniscule native herd with a hope of future repopulation efforts in other African countries that got their oryx from the Senegal herd.

The first phase of the

project was to obtain permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Department of the Interior, as well as coordinating with the Senegalese government, according to Charlie Seale, executive director of EWA.

"It's frustrating because these foreign countries really don't want the animals

See EWA SENDING, Page 6

THE LARGEST ANTLERMAX DEALER IN THE UNITED STATES! AVAILABLE IN BULK & BAGGED

Mumme's INC.

FOR THE BEST PRICE ON ALL SEASONS FEEDERS®

 <p>2,000 LB 4-WAY PROTEIN FEEDER</p> <p>^{1789 All Seasons Feeders® Retail} ONLY \$739 Mumme's Price</p>	 <p>1,000 LB 4-WAY PROTEIN FEEDER</p> <p>^{1589 All Seasons Feeders® Retail} ONLY \$549 Mumme's Price</p>	 <p>2,000 LB EXTENDED TUBE PROTEIN FEEDER</p> <p>^{1889 All Seasons Feeders® Retail} ONLY \$839 Mumme's Price</p>
 <p>1,000 LB EXTENDED TUBE PROTEIN FEEDER</p> <p>^{1689 All Seasons Feeders® Retail} ONLY \$649 Mumme's Price</p>	 <p>300 LB PROTEIN FEEDER</p> <p>^{1389 All Seasons Feeders® Retail} ONLY \$249 Mumme's Price</p>	 <p>HAY FEEDER</p> <p>^{1359 All Seasons Feeders® Retail} ONLY \$319 Mumme's Price</p>

Visit us at the NEW www.MummesInc.com

1-800-221-6398	830.426.3313	830.334.3323	830.931.2215	830.980.4924
(Freight Quotes & Shipping)	Hondo, TX 120 Hwy 173N	Pearsall, TX 1845 Business I-35N	Rio Medina, TX 10195 FM 2676	San Antonio, TX 24250 US Hwy 281N

*WE SHIP FEEDERS ANYWHERE IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES. 3,000 LB FEEDERS AVAILABLE. SKIDS AVAILABLE ON 2,000 LB & 3,000 LB FEEDERS. CALL FOR QUANTITY DISCOUNTS ON SELECT FEEDERS. FEEDER CAPACITY DETERMINED BY CASK WEIGHT. PRICE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.