



THE

QUAIL-TECH

ALLIANCE

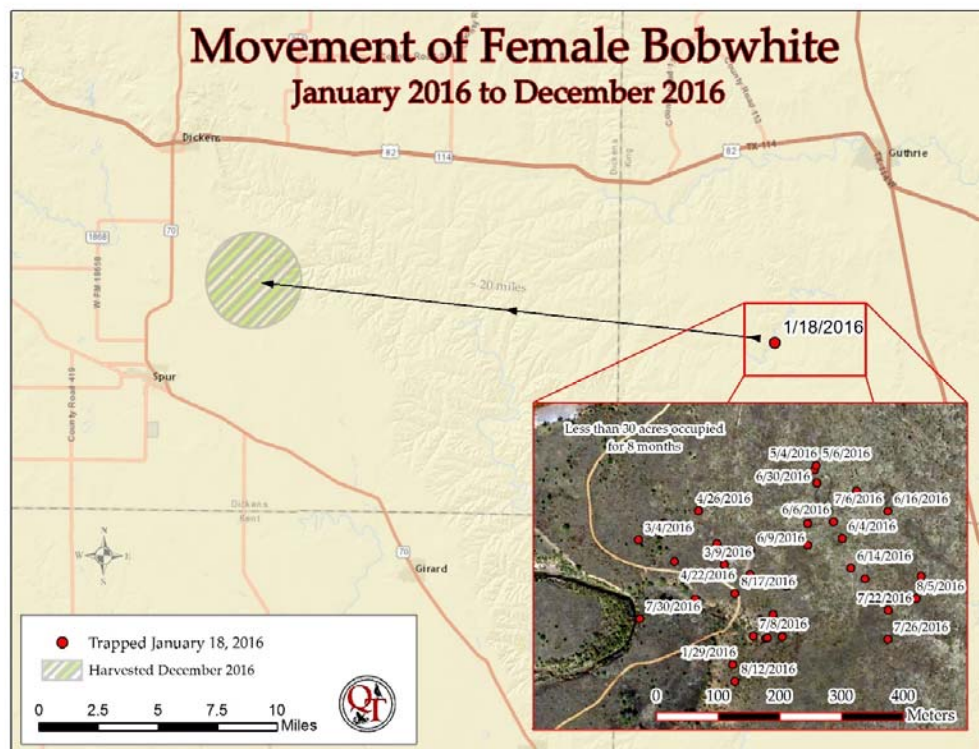


LAST JOURNEY OF BIRD 173

Rowdy White, Bo Reid, Isaac Young, Matt McEwen

While it is not unheard of for bobwhites to travel large distances (20 – 30+ miles), it is unusual for researchers to discover the fate of an intensively monitored bobwhite which left the study area rapidly. In late December a hunter harvested a bobwhite wearing a Quail-Tech leg band and radio transmitter over 20 miles from where two of our researchers had captured her a year ago. That's quite a trip for a bird which rarely flies more than 200 yards at a time!

Bo Reid and Isaac Young, current master's students with Quail-Tech, trapped Bird 173 (a juvenile female bobwhite) in January 2016 on the 6666 Ranch as part of a study investigating the influence of predator removal on the reproductive success of northern bobwhite in the Rolling Plains of Texas. From the time of her capture until late August, Bird 173 was tracked using radio telemetry several times per week. Then one day in September she could not be located after several weeks of combing the entire study area. This is not uncommon: radio transmitters malfunction, get damaged, or the bird leaves the study area. Usually this means an end to the data from that bird. In this case, Bird 173 and the hunter who harvested her, gave us one last bit of insight.



We'll never know the details about how she spent the 3 months between her last location on the 6666 Ranch and her new range north of Spur, but we do have more information about bobwhite dispersal. She also gave us several more questions to investigate in the future, including: Why did she travel so far? What factors influenced this dispersal? Is Bird 173's disappearance linked to the observation that bobwhites seem to disappear in October? Another Quail-Tech research project may eventually shed some light on this. Quail-Tech graduate student Jessica Mehta is currently examining northern bobwhite survival and movements during late summer through late autumn. As data becomes available we will offer updates on this phenomenon. This cooperation between researchers and hunters greatly helps quail conservation, and we urge anyone who finds a band on a harvested animal to contact the number on it, or the wildlife department of your nearest university. It is a great opportunity to help science. We want to thank the 6666 Ranch and the Burnett Foundation for their terrific support in making this research possible.