



# NEWSLETTER

**OUR GOAL:** To Promote, Preserve, and Experience One of the Greatest Southern Traditions Known... Quail Hunting.

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## A Quick Texas Bird Hunting Trip

By N. H. Holt

My neighbor and fellow church member, Bill Whitley, has become a fervent bird hunter over the last several years. He's got the bug bad! Bill has a 3,000 acre lease near Childress, TX, which borders the Red River near the southeast corner of the panhandle. Last December he invited me to go on a quick trip with him. I couldn't turn down the invitation. On Thursday, Dec. 13, 2007 about 3:00 p.m. we embarked on my maiden trip to Texas for a quail hunt. Instead of heading straight for the lease to hunt Bobwhites, Bill wanted to venture to Southwest Texas and hunt some Blue Scale Quail. He had success hunting these sprinters last year and wanted to give them another try. On Friday morning, 3:00 a.m., we stopped at a hotel in Abilene, TX for a short rest. Suffice it to say, as we passed the Albany exit, my mind began to wander and I thought of Harold Ridgeway, his lease, and the wonderful quail stories that have come back from that property!

We were up at 6:00 a.m. and headed toward Balmorhea, TX. Bill had some day hunts lined up with a rancher to hunt Blue Quail. We arrived at noon, got checked in at a quaint motel and headed out with the rancher to get a lay of his land, 15,000+ acres. Every rancher, farmer & game warden-oops we talked to said the 2007 hatch was the best in years and

there were plenty of birds! Off we went! The land was barren looking compared to what I was used to hunting. However, there were enough native grasses for feed and cover along with cactus, ditches and good size hills called the Davis Mountains, foothills of the Rockies. We saw plenty of wildlife including Jack Rabbits, Mule Deer, Turkey and Javalina hogs. All we saw of the Blue Quail were plenty of roosts and tracks! In addition, we observed a multitude of pretty points, dogs breaking, pretty points, dogs breaking, etc. I think I got within earshot of a few of the birds giggling as they ran away! Bill became quite frustrated and decided we needed to have more action. The new plan was to eat supper, get a good night sleep and leave Saturday by 6:00 a.m. for the six hour drive northeast to his lease.

On this leg of the trip, the highlight was the town of Balmorhea. Just southwest of town is a huge artesian well called San Solomon Springs and is part of a state park built by the Civilian Construction Corps, CCC. The well produces between 22 to 28 million gallons/day. Local farmers built a series



of irrigation canals to get water to their crops. The network of canals and gates was quite interesting. Google Balmorhea if you want to read more about the park and well.

We slept well Friday night. I don't think I even had to comb my hair when I woke up Saturday morning. We left Saturday morning before sunrise. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, the stars were truly magnificent and we saw hundreds of shooting stars! We arrived in Childress around noon and stopped for a bite to eat. The wind was howling with gusts between 20-35 mph. The temperature was in the mid thirties making it a little nippy considering the wind chill! Well, we took as long as we could over lunch. The waitress finally ran us off. I can only assume our tip did not warrant an extended stay at her table. We drove out to

the lease and Bill showed me the property. It was absolutely beautiful and everywhere you looked, it was birdie! The property was full of native grasses, plum thickets, fence lines, field buffers and wood lines. Not to mention SAND SPURS! As we drove around we contemplated whether or not it was worth hunting given the cold, windy conditions. Finally, we decided we had not driven all that way to sit in a motel. At the very least, we could let the dogs out to stretch and such, while hoping the wind would lie later in the afternoon. I'm glad we did!

Bill has four beautiful little female pointers, 3 liver/white and 1 black/white, all under 2 years of age. He has put a lot of time and effort in his dogs and it shows. They were the best dogs I've hunted behind in many years and each can do it all point, honor, retrieve, and listen! Their energy and enthusiasm are second to none! I took Molly, my 12-year-old jip and her son Sam, a 4-year-old Elhew that weighs 70 lbs. and is almost solid white with the exception of a liver, block shaped head. You could hitch a plow to him and he can go all day! He has a lot of potential but needs work. I was going to use this trip to get him as much bird work as I could. After one of the first hunts I wasn't sure he was going to survive! One of Bill's little dogs was pointing in a hillside plum thicket. Sam hon-

ored. I was proud of him but that would soon change! As I tried to move around the plum thicket to get to the other end, the birds and Bill's dog moved up. Needless to say, that's all Sam needed to see. I think he beat the birds out the other end! By the time I got around the thicket all I could see were the remnants of some birds flying across the field with Sam right behind them. I also heard Bill muttering something about the fact that Sam needed to be shot, sold, put up, etc.! Quickly, I made sure Sam understood the fact that he was not trained to be a flushing dog. Needless to say, he never budged again when he pointed or honored. By the time we got back to the truck after the final hunt that early evening we had moved 9 coveys of birds and our vests/game pouches were full. Unbelievable, considering the windy conditions! By the time we got the boots off, the dogs fed and the sand spurs out of their feet and ours, it was well past dark. We were ready to get some food and well-deserved sleep!

On Sunday morning we awoke to clear skies, no wind and the temperature was 23°. The high for the day was supposed to be 38°. We arrived in the field just shy of 8:00 am full of anticipation. While we let the dogs out to do their business, Bill and I were standing within 10 feet of a solitary plum bush when he said "LOOK" pointing at the ground under the bush. An entire covey was walking off the roost and heading towards a larger plum thicket some 75 yards away. We stood perfectly still and soon each of the dogs came by the roost and neither of them even hinted at a smell. By the time we got them on the trail the birds got

up wild in the plum thicket well ahead of us. The entire day the scenting conditions seemed ideal! However, the dogs were telling us otherwise. A couple of times, we walked right through an area that the dogs had just covered and stepped right in to the covey. Singles were hard to find as were crippled birds. By the end of a long day, we'd moved 13 coveys and, once again, had plenty of birds to clean and take home.

The dogs were completely worn out, as was I. Bill is in a lot better shape than I am and at least 10 years younger! As we walked back to the truck Sam fell in tow as if he had been trained to heel as a pup, at least that's what I told Bill. Upon our arrival at the truck, Sam simply collapsed right beside the truck in a wad of sand spurs! He didn't care, because he was done! So was I! But I had him right where I wanted him. We got the boots off the dogs and made sure their feet and Sam's entire body were sand spur free! We headed to the hotel for another hot meal and a good nights sleep.

We woke up early and let the dogs do their business prior to leaving. Naturally, after 2 full days of very hard hunting the dogs were stiff, sore and stood on the tailgate with a look questioning, "Do you expect me to jump all the way down there?" We were on the road by 6:00 a.m. and pulled into my driveway at 6:00 p.m. Bill was right. It was a quick whirlwind trip of 3,000 miles in 4.5 days and it was all we and the dogs could handle! The additional drive to/from SW Texas took up what would normally be a third day of hunting. However, we saw some beautiful scenery, great dog work, plenty of birds, and a variety of shooting ranging from good to bad!

And, I would do it again in a heartbeat!



# HEY FOLKS

Stan Stewart spoke to our club in June. He is employed as a wildlife biologist with the state. Stan did an excellent job of outlining where we are in the quail world. He was very realistic in stating that quail restoration is an uphill battle. He also stated that some geographic areas in the state today have an advantage over others by having an adequate quail population, a base to begin population enhancement. The Conecuh National Forest was one area he mentioned. Controlled burning is a part of the routine management of this area. Large portions of the forest up to 2000 acre blocks are burned. Burning ten percent (10) of this area would be better for the birds. Often private landowners do not control large blocks of land. This habitat limiting factor can be addressed by cooperative efforts. It is still true that if you want birds on your property, you would benefit

from getting your neighbor involved in providing quail habitat.

I have on your behalf attended a few committee meetings of the Alabama Quail Council. Kim Price, of Covey Rise, is serving as President. Lots of administrative work needs to be done, foremost being incorporation of the council. In addition to incorporation, the council will collectively pool quail conservation efforts. Some of the organizations participating are Alabama Wildlife Federation, Quail Forever, Alabama Extension System, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, AQH and Covey Rise.

QU has not been in attendance recently, but I hope they will join the effort. Ted Devos has individually participated.

The Quail Council is working to have a written plan for quail recov-

ery and conservation. The Alabama Wildlife Federation is willing to participate financially in this effort. Thank you, Tim Gothard, for this commitment from AWF.

Your lease is slowly shaping up. Jim Watkins loaned us a disc and a bush hog. Harold Ridgeway loaned us a Massey Ferguson tractor and Bill Warren loaned us a cyclone seeder. Putting this equipment together we can scratch the dirt and plant seed. Partridge peas have been planted in the old wild-life plots. Fescue was sprayed with Razor Pro back in the late spring. New plots have been identified. Thurman Campbell disced those plots, last Saturday. Hopefully they will be planted by the time you receive the newsletter.

All for now.

Frank Harris, President

## Treasurer's Desk

Everyone's 2008 membership dues are payable. If you have not yet paid me, please send me your check made out to AL Quail Hunters, 1901 Morgan Road SE, Bessemer, AL 35022. Your annual \$15.00 dues are income tax deductible. You can call me at my office (205) 424-1381 or email me your questions to coal-carr@bham.rr.com

Thank you,  
Bob Carr,  
AQH Treasurer



## Welcome To Our Newest Members

Brad Berryhill  
from Birmingham

Jim Cook  
from Sylacauga

Jeff Fuller  
from Birmingham

Rusty Fuller  
from Birmingham

Steve LeCroy  
from Altoona

Joel McKemie  
from Sylacauga

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from Birmingham

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from Birmingham

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