

species of gallinaceous birds of North America, Aldrich and Duvall (1955) noted that mountain quail were native to the Pacific coastal region of the extreme western United States. They state that mountain quail were established after introductions into the mountains of eastern Washington, western Idaho, eastern Oregon, and central Nevada.

During the past 20 years, information addressing translocations of mountain quail by State agencies has been better documented than it had been in prior years. For example, a total of 1,293 mountain quail have been released in Nevada counties, including Nye, Churchill, Pershing, Washoe, Elko, and Lander, since 1986 (Vogel and Reese 2002). All birds were captured at the China Lakes Naval Weapons Station, Mojave Desert, California, an area that is outside and west of the proposed DPS geographical area. In Oregon, 75 mountain quail were captured in the western Cascade Mountain Range of southwestern Oregon and translocated into northeastern Oregon between 1997 and 1999, partly to assess breeding range movements of both resident and translocated mountain quail (Pope 2002). Additionally, a total of 209 mountain quail were translocated to three separate locations in central Oregon in 2001 using birds that were captured in western Oregon (Jackle *et al.* 2002) as part of a restoration plan.

The DPS policy states that genetic information may be used to provide evidence of separation. The numerous historic and recent translocation efforts as discussed above may have lead to genetic homogenization of mountain quail. Assessing evidence of genetic separation among either historic or current populations of mountain quail is likely to be complicated by past translocation efforts. No comprehensive genetic evaluation for discreteness of mountain quail rangewide or within in the proposed DPS is currently available. Also, the petitioners submit that the genetic differentiation of mountain quail subspecies or populations has not been adequately tested, and refer to unpublished preliminary data that indicate no genetic differences exist among mountain quail in western North America (Kavanaugh *et al.* 2000).

Additionally, in evaluating information regarding translocations, it is difficult to discern which are introductions, reintroductions, or supplementations of existing mountain quail populations. "Introduction" has been used to define the release of a species in a new range, "reintroduction" refers to release of a species into historical range that is no longer

inhabited by that species, and "supplementation" is release of the species into currently inhabited range (Vogel and Reese 2002). Given the history of translocations of mountain quail, it is currently difficult to clearly identify the historical native range of the species. The petitioners make no attempt to distinguish between the species' potential native or introduced ranges.

Two other factors to consider with regard to discreteness or isolation of a population are the behavioral and morphological aspects. Delehanty (1997) initiated a study to determine behavioral differences and similarities in male and female mountain quail. He also examined and was successful at developing a method to determine genetic detectability of sex using microsatellite fragments from undegraded DNA. He concluded that many behavioral displays are universal among both sexes of mountain quail, while some are particular only to males. These behaviors were observed by Delehanty (1997) in captive-reared birds and in wild populations at sites in the eastern Sierra Nevada of east central California, western Nevada, and in the Mojave Desert of southern California. He further confirmed the monomorphic plumage and size characteristics of mountain quail from known geographical places. The study served to demonstrate that behavioral and morphological aspects are not limiting factors in reproduction when translocation is considered. These conclusions were further confirmed by Pope and Crawford (2001) in controlled studies of wild populations of mountain quail when 75 birds were translocated from the Cascades of southwestern Oregon to Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in northeastern Oregon. The petitioners did not provide evidence to document whether mountain quail within the proposed DPS exhibit any unique behavioral or morphological traits. No information is presented in the petition, nor is any available in Service files, to indicate that any physical, genetic, behavioral, morphological, physiological, or ecological differences between mountain quail that occur in the proposed DPS and those found outside of it.

In summary, to make a DPS determination, we examined the physical, physiological, ecological, and behavioral factors and considered the complicating nature of past translocation efforts. Since there are no international government boundaries of significance, this condition for a finding of discreteness was not considered in

reaching this determination. Neither the information presented in the petition nor that available in Service files presents substantial scientific or commercial information to demonstrate that the DPS, as proposed for mountain quail by the petitioners, is discrete from the remainder of the taxon. Accordingly, we are unable to define a listable entity of mountain quail within those areas of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada as described in the petition. Therefore, we did not address the second element for determining a DPS, which is the potential significance of discrete populations of mountain quail to the remainder of the taxon. Finally, since no DPS of mountain quail can be defined at this time, we did not evaluate its status as endangered or threatened on the basis of either the Act's definitions of those terms or the factors in section 4(a) of the Act.

Petition Finding

We have reviewed the petition, obtainable literature cited in the petition, other pertinent literature, and information available in Service files, and we have consulted with State and Federal agency biologists. After our review, we find the petition does not present substantial information to indicate that the petitioned action is warranted. This finding is based on the following: (a) Insufficient information exists to enable us to determine whether the mountain quail in the proposed DPS are separated from other mountain quail throughout the range of the taxon; (b) complicating information about past translocations of mountain quail currently precludes clearly determining the native historical distribution of the species; and (c) evidence is insufficient to demonstrate that genetic, morphological, ecological, or behavioral differences exist among extant mountain quail populations.

References Cited

A complete list of all references cited herein is available upon request from the Snake River Basin Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES**).

Author

The primary author of this notice is Rich Howard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES**).

Authority:

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).