

BLM Study Review of Hells Canyon Complex Studies

Movements, Habitat Use and Population Characteristics of Mountain Quail in West-Central Idaho; Big Canyon Creek

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1. INTRODUCTION

Because of drastic declines in distribution and population sizes of mountain quail in Idaho, a 1996 study was conducted in the Big Canyon Creek area of Hells Canyon. The 1996 study compared results from an earlier mountain quail study conducted in the same locale in 1964 and 1965 (Ormiston 1966). The objectives of the study were primarily to: (1) to evaluate the status of late-winter use of areas by mountain quail; and (2) evaluate the feasibility of conducting a comprehensive investigation of mountain quail ecology.

2. CONCLUSIONS

The 1996 study suggests that there are no mountain quail residing in the Big Canyon Creek area or that they are present in such low numbers as to remain undetected. The study noted that survey timing may be partly responsible for not detecting concentration areas even with a small population. It was also noted that plant species composition was similar to Ormiston's study in 1964 and 1965, but the densities and overall cover of species is higher.

Because no mountain quail were located it was concluded that there are not sufficient birds present to justify a future graduate student project in the area unless it is in cooperation with a habitat manipulation study or a reintroduction project.

3. STUDY ADEQUACY

Because no mountain quail were detected no information was collected on mountain quail ecology in the area. However, it should be noted that a primary focus of this study was to evaluate the feasibility of conducting a future comprehensive study in the area. This study does not answer specific questions in regards to project impacts and development of Protection, Maintenance, and Enhancement measures (PMEs).

4. BLM CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The study exemplifies the need for additional studies that will document current distribution of mountain quail in areas where historic occurrences have been

documented. The study also identifies changes in vegetation cover and density in an area where mountain quail were historically present, but currently are in very low numbers or not present.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that additional mountain quail surveys are needed in areas where mountain quail historically occurred to document present status of the species.

Additional studies are needed in regards to plant succession and habitat changes which may impact mountain quail.