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Wingshooting

Eyeworms Killing Texas Bobwhites

Sat, Sep 20, 2014

Crickets carry the eyeworm in a larval state.



University believe they have found the culprit that has contributed to the decline of bobwhite quail in the Rolling Plains area of Texas. The study originated in 2011 after a precipitous decline of bobwhites in that area the previous year. Scientists performed necropsies on hundreds of birds from the 19-million-acre Rolling Plains and discovered parasitic eyeworms had killed many of them.

The eyeworms can range 1/8 - to 3/4-inch in length. The worms move from eye to eye in the quail's sinus cavities, where they suck blood and release eggs.

According to the website, Texas Tech Today, the three-year study is part of Operation Idiopathic Decline, a multi-million dollar study funded by the private Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation and titled "Evidence of an *Oxyspirura petrowi* epizootic in Northern Bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*) Texas, USA." The results were published in the *Journal of Wildlife Disease*.

Ron Kendall, professor of environmental toxicology at Texas Tech, says that crickets carry the eyeworm in a larval state. And in 2010, following heavy rains, the cricket population exploded in the Rolling Plains. Quail infected themselves with eyeworm nematodes by eating crickets. Further, crickets feeding on quail feces ingested eyeworm eggs, creating a cycle that led to a massive quail die-off. Kendall added that researchers are in "the process of a major research and development effort" to find a remedy to the situation.

See more at <http://tinyurl.com/tttquail>.

Cover image courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.



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