

Montezuma Quail Detection Survey Trip Report

August 24-27, 2013

By Sylvestre Sorola, retired biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife
Max Traweek, retired biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife

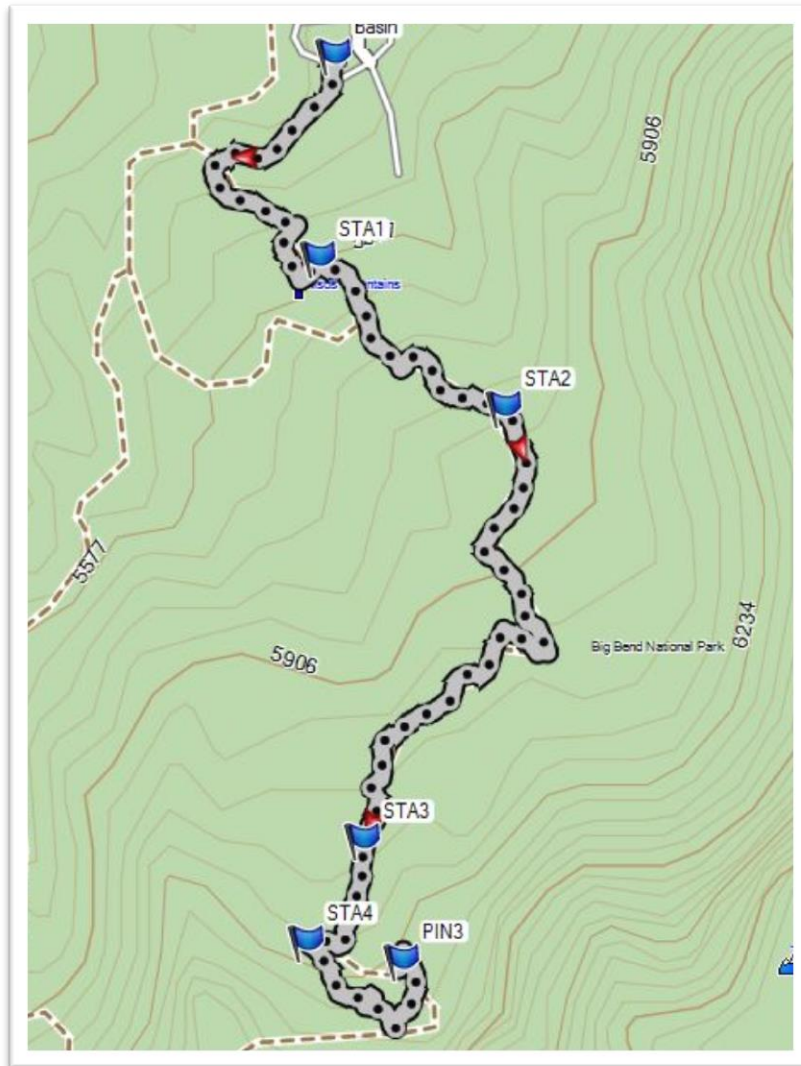
We backpacked into the Chisos Mountains on Saturday afternoon, 24th of August, 2013 and returned to the Basin on Tuesday afternoon, August 27th, 2013. We camped Saturday night at Pinnacles 3 campsite and then proceeded on Sunday morning to Colima1 campsite where we camped on Sunday and Monday night. Below is a more detailed description of how we attempted to locate Montezuma Quail, including gps tracks showing what areas were covered and waypoints where quail detection was attempted. Also, we are including some incidental habitat observations. We called at 31 sites, including the two campsites where we stayed. No Montezuma Quail were detected during the survey.

Methodology: Every .2 to .3 mile we would stop and play a Montezuma Quail breeding call for approximately 10 minutes. We started out whistling the breeding call but I was not able to project enough volume for the sound to carry very far. We then began to use a high quality National Geographic Birds of North America phone app recording of the breeding call with a small remote speaker to increase the volume to the approximate volume of a calling male in the wild. The recording of the assembly call on this app has too much static so I would whistle the assembly call while playing the breeding call at the same time or sometimes would do them separately during each calling session. Several quiet periods were utilized during each calling session in an attempt to detect any quail responding. After an approximate 10 minute period we would move on to another location and repeat the process. Occasionally, we would step off the trail to avoid winds so that we could better hear any call responses. During that time, I would search for quail digging sign but was not able to find any. Overall, very little time was spent looking for quail feeding sign off trail.

Saturday, 24th August, 2013

2:19 pm. Depart Basin parking lot and arrive at Pinnacles campsite 3 at about 6 pm. Weather cool and mostly sunny. Clouds and light shower came in around 8 pm. Called at 5 locations or stations including the Pinnacles campsite. No response.

Map of Route on Saturday, August 24



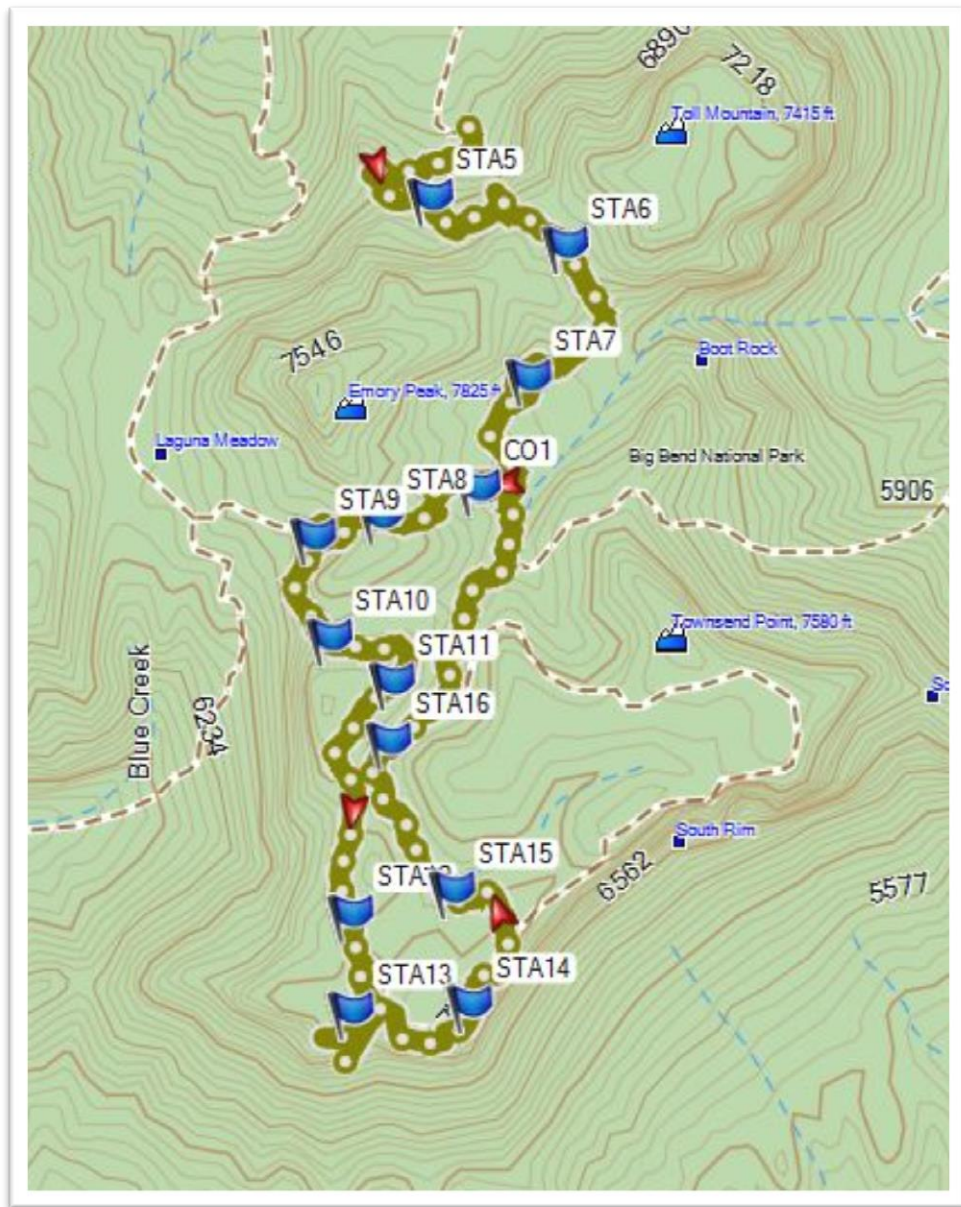
List of Waypoint Coordinates for Saturday, August 24th

Name /	Position	Elevation		
PIN3	N29 15 16.8 W103 17 56.4	6260 ft		
STA1	N29 15 59.7 W103 18 02.8	5595 ft		
STA2	N29 15 50.6 W103 17 48.6	5853 ft		
STA3	N29 15 24.2 W103 17 59.4	6088 ft		
STA4	N29 15 17.9 W103 18 03.7	6230 ft		

Sunday, 25th August, 2013

Depart Pinnacles campsite 3 at 8:47 am. Hiked to Colima campsite 1 and after setting up camp hiked and called over the Colima Trail, Southwest Rim Trail and then back down the Boot Canyon Trail to camp around 8:00 pm. Weather was mostly sunny and comfortable. Called 13 times with no response.

Map of Route on Sunday, August 25



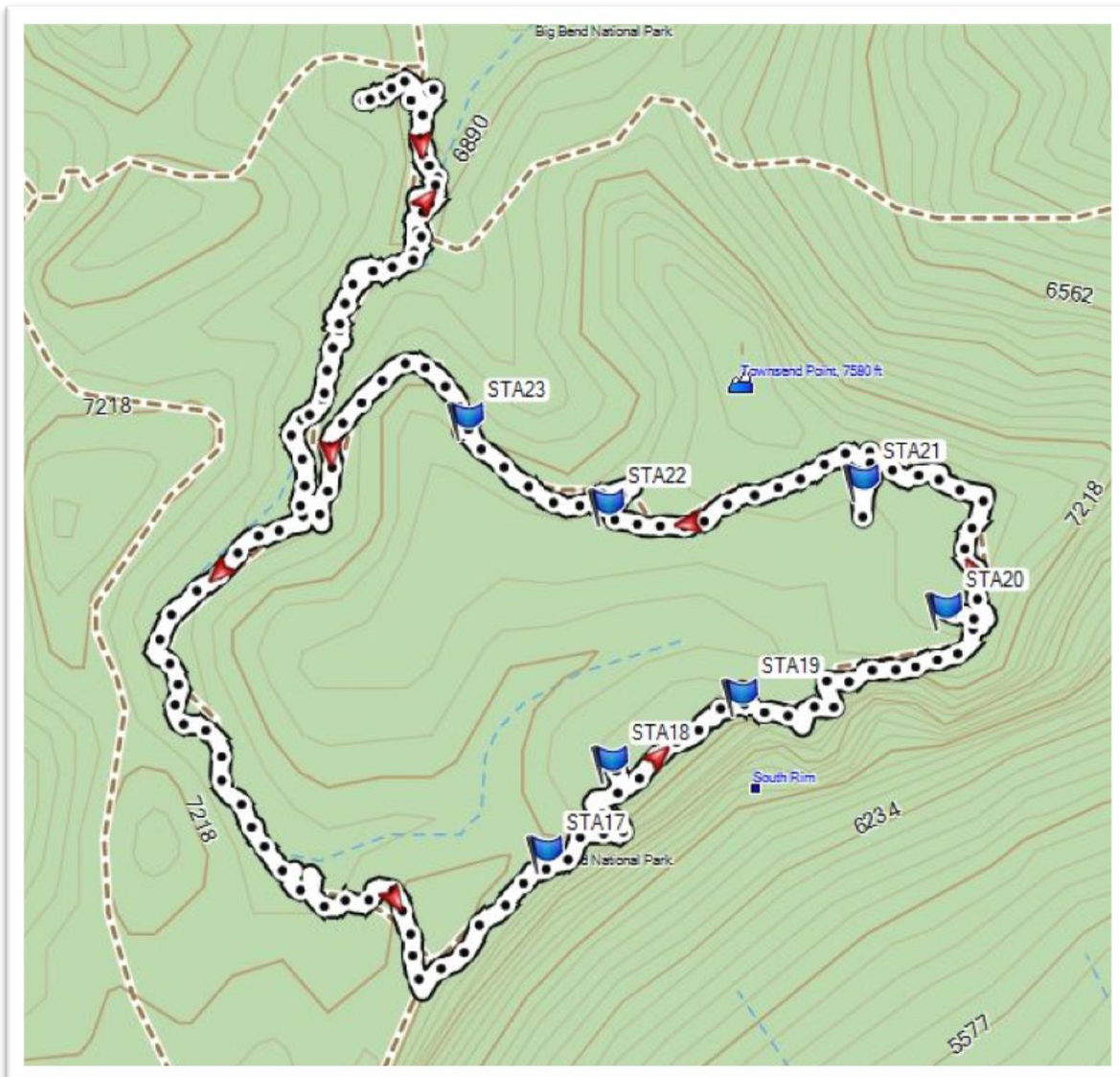
List of Waypoint Coordinates for Sunday, August 25th

Name /	Position	Elevation
CO1	N29 14 34.3 W103 17 54.7	6929 ft
STA10	N29 14 16.9 W103 18 16.3	7182 ft
STA11	N29 14 11.8 W103 18 07.3	7258 ft
STA12	N29 13 44.8 W103 18 13.3	7229 ft
STA13	N29 13 33.6 W103 18 13.3	7308 ft
STA14	N29 13 34.4 W103 17 55.9	7331 ft
STA15	N29 13 47.6 W103 17 58.4	7162 ft
STA16	N29 14 04.9 W103 18 07.7	7068 ft
STA5	N29 15 08.1 W103 18 01.6	6622 ft
STA6	N29 15 02.5 W103 17 41.9	6931 ft
STA7	N29 14 47.1 W103 17 47.3	6854 ft
STA8	N29 14 31.1 W103 18 08.9	7166 ft
STA9	N29 14 28.6 W103 18 18.8	7037 ft

Monday, 26th August, 2013

9:03 am. Depart camp and hike up Boot Canyon Trail to South Rim Trail and around Northeast Rim Trail back down to Boot Canyon Trail and camp at 5:08 pm. Weather partly cloudy and cool. Called 7 times with no response.

Map of Route on Monday, August 26



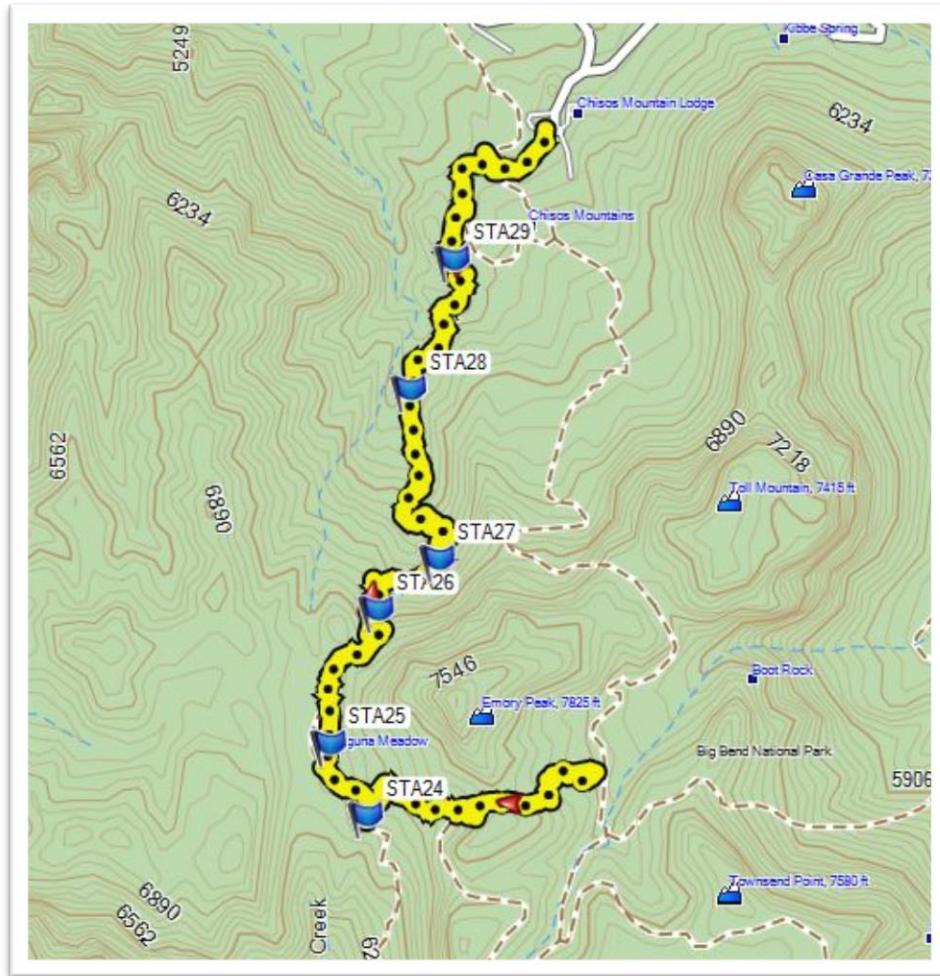
List of Waypoint Coordinates for Monday, August 26th

Name /	Position	Elevation			
STA17	N29 13 49.8 W103 17 41.2	7250 ft			
STA18	N29 13 55.1 W103 17 36.2	7357 ft			
STA19	N29 13 59.0 W103 17 26.6	7360 ft			
STA20	N29 14 04.2 W103 17 11.3	7447 ft			
STA21	N29 14 11.8 W103 17 17.5	7444 ft			
STA22	N29 14 10.3 W103 17 36.5	7412 ft			
STA23	N29 14 15.4 W103 17 47.1	7231 ft			

Tuesday, 27th August, 2013

Had slow and steady rain at camp for about 4 hours. Received approximately .5 inches rain. Depart camp around 11:43 am and hiked Colima Trail and Laguna Meadow trail back down to the Basin. Arrived at Basin around 3:51 pm. Called at 6 locations. No response.

Map of Route on Tuesday, August 27



List of Waypoint Coordinates for Tuesday, August 27th

Name	Position	Elevation
STA24	N29 14 28.4 W103 18 35.6	6813 ft
STA25	N29 14 39.2 W103 18 42.6	6681 ft
STA26	N29 14 59.3 W103 18 33.5	6538 ft
STA27	N29 15 07.0 W103 18 22.1	6254 ft
STA28	N29 15 32.4 W103 18 27.4	5623 ft
STA29	N29 15 51.9 W103 18 19.2	5505 ft

Observations:

2005 was the last time I had been to the South Rim. Changes observed during this visit were the number of dead Pinyon Pines along the Pinnacles Trail to Boot Canyon and along the Southwest Rim Trail. A very noticeable difference in amount of tall and thick grass cover everywhere and especially where pines have died and the canopy cover has opened up. Grass cover looks unlike any Montezuma Quail habitat observed in the Trans Pecos or the Edwards Plateau in the past. Site where quail were found in 2005 near SW4 campsite, along the edge of the Rim, was noticeably different and thick with grass cover. Oxalis was abundant along trails in most locations in the high Chisos but few plants observed off trail in thick grass. Did not observe any Oxalis growing on edges of the Laguna Meadow Trail.