

# WILDLIFE TRENDS

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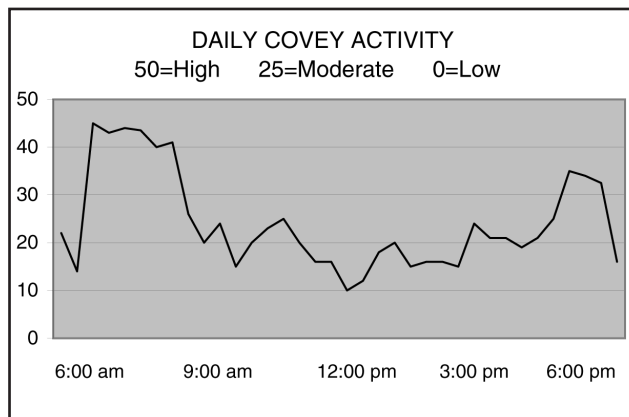
## Quail Hunting Tips

by D. Clay Sisson

Now that quail season is upon us our thoughts turn to bird dogs, shotguns, and quail hunting. A thorough understanding of the habits of the species being pursued and how they interact with you while you are hunting may help improve your hunting efficiency. During the course of our studies of quail management and hunting on private Plantations in south Georgia over the last 12 years, we have had the privilege to study quail behavior and habits during the hunting season, as well as how they interact with bird dogs and hunters. Some of what we have learned may help you find more coveys this winter.

Understanding the behavior of the bird and their patterns of activity is the first step to more efficient hunting. A few years ago we conducted a study in which we radio-tracked 4 coveys of quail six days a week for an entire hunting season. Each day one covey was tracked continuously, recording their location and activity level every 15 minutes from daylight until dark. This produced data for 86 days of continuous tracking and totaled more than 4,200 readings on location and activity levels. During the same time period, the nearby Albany airport was collecting weather data on the same 15 minute time intervals. The most significant part of the information collected was on the activity levels over the course of a day. These results were really about what you would expect but interesting nonetheless. The highest level of activity occurred early in the morning, usually during the second hour of daylight. This peak level of activity would last for an hour or hour and a half and then taper off until midday when there was usually a three to four hour period of very little activity. Activity levels would then start to pick up some around 3:00 with a second shorter and less pronounced peak later in the day. This same pattern was seen over and over where a covey would come off the roost and be very active early in the morning, show moderate activity through late morning, and very little activity through midday with coveys often moving to heavier cover during that time to loaf. Activity did not pick up again until late afternoon with another period of movement associated with late afternoon feeding and going to roost. Long distance movements during the course of a day were uncommon with most coveys moving no more than 200 to 300 yards all day and having ranges of only 5 to 10 acres for the whole season. Included is a graph depicting this typical movement pattern.

These movements were of course influenced by weather. There were some relationships indicated by our data. Basically what we found was that coveys were more active in cold weather, high relative humidity, and light winds. Decreased activity levels were associated with hot weather, low humidity, high winds, and rain. The strongest correlation to a weather variable was very little activity any time an east wind was blowing. While we



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