

# Texas Quail Index takes flight

May 30 2014, by Steve Byrns

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The Texas Quail Index, a statewide effort by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to monitor wild quail population dynamics, has taken full flight, said the effort's coordinator.

"There are going to be more ears cocked skyward listening to the bobwhite's iconic whistle this month than ever before," said Dr. Dale Rollins, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist in San Angelo and statewide coordinator for the Reversing the Quail Decline Initiative.

"The scope of the Quail Decline Index is impressive – it's a mass effort to help landowners and other 'students of [quail](#)' understand what I refer to as the 'quail equation' on their respective properties.

"We've spent the last month training AgriLife Extension agents and volunteers who are now implementing the demonstrations on 50 separate sites located across the state."

Rollins said the [index](#) was initiated in April in 43 counties and seven Texas Parks and Wildlife Department wildlife management areas. AgriLife Extension agents were among some 50 index leaders who were trained in the proper methods of counting quail and assessing habitat at the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch near Roby last month.

Participating AgriLife Extension agents will be the leaders and points of contact in their respective counties. Rollins said they are well-versed in implementing the index, which involves multiple counts of quail, including whistle counts, roadside counts and the measurements of

related habitat conditions.

The ultimate goal is to determine if any of the various counts will reliably predict how successful the upcoming quail season will be, he said.

Rollins said the various index protocols being implemented are comprehensive in scope.

"Along with the counts, we'll be assessing nesting habitat, a key limiting factor for quail, using what are called dummy nests. At each site AgriLife Extension agents will oversee the placing of 24 of these simulated nests and check their status at 14 and 28 days. They'll use game cameras along the transects to depict what the predator community is at each site. Then, they'll post the results and pictures from each of the 57 sites as they come in."

Rollins said funding for the work is part of a special appropriation made to AgriLife Extension through a partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department during the 83rd Legislature to address the decline of bobwhite and scaled quail in Texas. He said the funds were allocated to address both research issues and outreach education. To date, 13 different research proposals have been funded.

AgriLife Extension outreach efforts include both adult and youth education efforts. The Quail Appreciation Days being held across the state join the Texas Quail Index as two of the adult educational components, while the youth educational efforts include such activities as the Bobwhite Brigade Wildlife Leadership Camps.

"We're really excited about the Texas Quail Index and the enthusiasm the project has garnered thus far," Rollins said. "The concern for the declining population of bobwhites and scaled quail means a lot to our

local ranchers, business economy and area hunters.

"Past AgriLife Extension studies have shown that a typical quail hunter from Dallas spends about \$8,500 annually in pursuit of his or her sport with about half of that being spent in the local economies. So when quail hunting drops off, the ripple effects impact lots of folks."

**More information:** For more information about the Texas Quail Index, see [wildlife.tamu.edu/quail/texas-quail-index](https://wildlife.tamu.edu/quail/texas-quail-index)

Provided by Texas A&M University

Citation: Texas Quail Index takes flight (2014, May 30) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-05-texas-quail-index-flight.html>

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