

AgriLife Extension Program to Address Chronic Texas Quail Demise

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MERIDIAN - Where have all the quail gone? That's the question Texas AgriLife Extension Service will address during a symposium by the same name set for 8:30 a.m. May 27 at the Meridian Civic Center.

Dr. Dale Rollins, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist at San Angelo, said he's contacted daily by quail enthusiasts who have lost the birds from previously quail-rich areas and say nothing has changed, but the birds are gone.

"This lament usually comes from the eastern Rolling Plains and western Cross Timbers areas or I-35 West to U.S. Hwy 83, areas that until 10 years ago had decent to impressive quail populations," Rollins said. "Unfortunately, the trend seems to move a little further west each year."

Rollins said loss of quail has both ecological and economical implications, because, he said, the birds serve as "the canary in the coal mine" for a host of grassland birds whose populations are also plummeting. Economically, he said in most of west and south Texas, a good quail hunting lease is worth twice that of a grazing lease.

"I'm not convinced anyone has 'the' answer, because there are likely multiple factors involved," he said. "During this program, we'll examine what those factors include, and what we can do to slow and hopefully reverse the decline of quail and other grassland birds."

Rollins, who serves as the director for the newly established Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch in Fisher County, will unveil some new research efforts aimed at the eastern Rolling Plains.

"The RPQRR seeks to investigate several aspects of 'quail decline' in this area, including habitat changes, disease aspects and quail restoration efforts," Rollins said. "We're currently looking for cooperators for several of these projects."

The meeting is sponsored by AgriLife Extension's Quail Decline Initiative, the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch and the Park Cities Chapter of Quail Unlimited.

Individual registration is \$10 by May 25 and \$15 thereafter. The fee includes lunch.

To pre-register, contact David Winkler at dwinkler@ag.tamu.edu

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