

[Click to view this email in a browser](#)



## Houston, we have a problem. by Dr. Dale Rollins

Three of Tom Hanks' movies are as good as it gets in my eyes: "Forrest Gump", "Saving Private Ryan", and "Apollo 13." I can weave a quail tapestry around any of them . . . this time it's Apollo 13.

Unless you were of age during the 1960s and early 70s, you can never appreciate how much the NASA space program brought us. Technology and triumphs, heroes and heartbreaks. I've watched a lot of liftoffs on black and white television, including one on June 1969 when man first stepped on the moon. Genuine reality TV.

If you haven't seen Apollo 13, consider this a homework assignment. Here's a re-cap:

For a while after lift-off everything was fine, then the crew heard an explosion. The space module lurched out of control momentarily. The crew finally gained control but didn't know what had happened. Their oxygen levels in one tank went to zero and we're leaking from another. Ground control in Houston was monitoring the situation and was aghast at the status of the wounded space module when Commander Jim Lovell (played by Hanks) radioed that infamous declaration "Houston we have a problem."

Over the next 72 hours scientists and spectators exercised slide rules and prayers while the eyes of the world were glued on the adventure unfolding over 200,000 miles away. After some incredibly tense moments, and emotional roller coasters, the crew finally landed safely.

Many things had to happen over that odyssey; a CO2 filter had to be gerrymandered from spare parts and duct tape; one of the crew members fought a high fever; reserve battery power was miniscule; and there were naysayers on the ground saying it was all over. But in both the Hollywood and the live version victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat.

See any parody therein with our quail situation?

Nearly all quail hunting reports outside of south Texas I've heard have been depressing, despite what I consider to be "great" habitat conditions and average to above average rainfall. Many argue that breeding stock was down from the dry weather in 2008-09 . . . could be. But spring cock call counts here at RPQRR suggested breeding capital similar to the previous year. Grasshopper abundance across west Texas was OFF the chart. Many quail prognosticators were upbeat in September, but come opening day quail numbers appear to have imploded . . . again.



My floral compasses have led me astray. Generally if we have a broomweed crop and an above average cotton crop, we have a quail crop. Broomweeds . . . yes; cotton . . . record crop; bobwhites . . . not yet.

Yes, it's been hot, and there is lots of cover, so maybe things will improve . . . maybe. Our trapping success is fair to poor, and flushing a covey from the roads is a topic of note around here. Helicopter counts conducted November

## Help support RPQRR

December is often a time for tax planning. If you'd like to help support RPQRR, [[Click Here](#)]; donations are tax-deductible.

## How do I get e-Quail?

Got a new e-mail address? Please [[Click Here](#)] to update your information if you wish to continue receiving e-Quail.

Forwarded from a friend? Please [[Click Here](#)] to sign up for the RPQRR e-Quail Newsletters!

## Blues Bros.

Consider this an "APB" (all points bulletin) for blue quail east of a line from Amarillo to San Angelo. If you hunt or ranch in that area, I'd appreciate a report. RPQRR is right on that line and we've trapped only two blue quail this fall (with 80% of our trapping completed). I've heard of some isolated populations in Runnels and Concho counties, and get a report occasionally of blues in Throckmorton County. Supposedly 70% of the quail population in Throckmorton County during the 1940s was blue quail. Now it's almost entirely "blue" quail hunters.

## By the Numbers

**9** - That's how many puppies my "Better" Babe had on 25 October. Reckon we're

13-14 suggested RPQRR's covey count had decreased 50% from last year's, which was about half of what it was in 2008. Jackrabbits are endangered species and cottontails are as unusual as a walk-in covey rise on blue quail.

Give us some help Mission Control . . . our gyros are off kilter. Something is amiss. The quail world is waiting anxiously.

RPQRR is working on a bold new quail mission; it's still taking shape, and Mission Control's minds are abuzz. As we head towards the back side of the moon, and lose our communication for a while, stay tuned for our re-entry plan. We hope to unveil it at the Distinguished Lectureship in Quail Management on January 30.

### Save the Date!

Mark **Friday, Jan 28, 2011** as the date for the 4th annual Distinguished Lectureship in Quail Management in downtown Roby, TX. This year's speaker will be Brad Mueller of Tallahassee, Florida. The theme is "The Art of Quail Management." For more information, contact Rachel Vega at 325-653-4576 or e-mail [rvega@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:rvega@ag.tamu.edu).



going to have to cross-fence some pastures here at the Ranch as most of the pastures are named after bird dogs. Babe could not have picked a better year to be on "maternity leave", unfortunately!

**Find us on the Web!**



### Cadence call (Conservation cadences from the [Bobwhite Brigade](#))

At first I was a little squirmy,  
 When they mentioned taxidermy.  
 Blood and guts and brains and eyes,  
 But it turned out well to my surprise.  
 Sound off: bob-white, sound off: bob-white!  
 Bring it on down now,  
 Bob-white Brigade, Bob-white Brigade!

### In the News

**Point out poachers-** "Point out poachers" is the latest billboard exhorting Texans to report game violations. RPQRR manager Lloyd LaCoste snapped this picture just north of Snyder recently.



**Dr. Kelly Reyna hired as director of Texas Audubon's Quail and Grassland Bird Initiative-** Dr. Kelly Reyna is the newly hired director of Texas Audubon's Quail and Grassland Bird Initiative (<http://tx.audubon.org/Quail.html>). Dr. Reyna earned his Master's degree at Texas A&M University in 2007 (under my tutelage), then went on to earn a Ph.D. at North Texas State University researching impacts of heat on quail embryology. Reyna served two tours in the U. S. Navy, and has spent two years of his life underwater (on a nuclear submarine) . . . he's pretty much unflappable . . . not a bad quality in a leader! Contact Reyna at [kreyna@txaudubon.org](mailto:kreyna@txaudubon.org).

### MBATR (Meanwhile Back at the Ranch)

We bid goodbye and good luck to Seth Claybaker (on

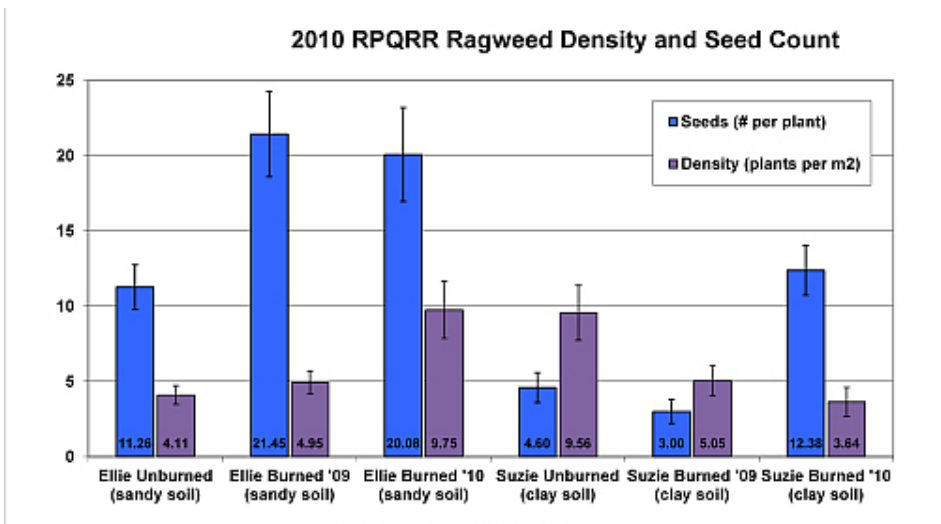


right) who has served as an intern for the past 15 months here at the Ranch. Seth is moving on to graduate school at McNeese State University in Louisiana likely studying ducks . . . the "quail" of his life go "quack." Seth's made a good hand in radio telemetry, prescribed burning, and as cook . . .we'll miss him. Student interns are an important part of our workforce here . . . it's a win-win for the intern and RPQRR. For more information about internships at RPQRR, contact Dr. Rollins.



**Did You Know?** by [Dr. Dale Rollins](#)

Burning boosts seed production in western ragweed? Data from the past two years suggests seed production is increased 2 to 3-fold, and the effect of burning lasts for at least two years. We observed greater seed yields on sandier vs. clay loam soils. Plant density was also increased on sandier soils, but decreased on clay loam sites.



Click for Full Image

**Plant of the Month: Dotted gayfeather (*Liatris punctata*)**

When it's growing this plant is nondescript; when it flowers, you'll appreciate it. When it's a cold morning in February, quail will appreciate its bounty. Dotted gayfeather, also known as blazing star or button snakeroot, is common on dry, gravelly soils across west Texas. It is a hardy perennial and its tap root may reach depths of 10 feet or more. The seeds are quite apparent right now, but when I did my Master's research, it seemed as if bobwhites and blues in southwestern OK didn't begin to eat the seeds until later in the winter.





For more information [[Click Here](#)].

---

[Forward this message to a friend](#)

---

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

---

Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch  
7887 Highway 87 N  
San Angelo, Texas 76901

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

