

ANNUAL REPORT 2025





ABOUT US

The Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation (RPQRF) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit focusing on one thing: understanding and managing bobwhite and scaled quail in West Texas. Everything we do centers around quail and quail hunting, as reflected by our mission:

To preserve Texas' wild quail hunting heritage, for this, and future, generations.

The Foundation and its Research Ranch were established to provide a living laboratory to devise land management strategies for the benefit of quail and also as an exemplary property to demonstrate the best methodologies and techniques to other “students of quail.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF ...	3
FOUNDATION MESSAGE ...	4
LONG-TERM DATA AT THE RESEARCH RANCH ...	5
RAPTOR PREDATION OF QUAIL...	15
PARASITES IN QUAIL...	19
LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE...	23
OUTREACH AND EDUCATION...	29
TEXAS HORNED LIZARD PROJECT BY DALLAS ZOO ...	31
DONOR RECOGNITION ...	33



2025 Board of Directors

STEVE SNELL—PRESIDENT

GARY COONEY

JOE CRAFTON

DAN CRAINE

PETE DELKUS

EVAN McMORDIE

STEPHEN HOWARD

RAYMOND MORROW

JUSTIN TRAIL

2025 Staff

DR. RYAN O'SHAUGHNESSY—EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DR. DAN FOLEY—RESEARCH SCIENTIST

MITCHELL RIGGS—OPERATIONS MANAGER

DANA WRIGHT—DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH

KYNDAL UNDERWOOD—RANCH BIOLOGIST

SEAN BLATSTEIN—TECHNICIAN

MARCUS COSENTINO—TECHNICIAN

JACK CURRY—TECHNICIAN

CHANDLER DARNELL—TECHNICIAN

LUNA LI—TECHNICIAN

KASEY PIRKLE—TECHNICIAN

SIMEON POEHLMAN—TECHNICIAN

NATHAN SHARPE—TECHNICIAN

EMILY THORNOCK—TECHNICIAN

LEIA WATSON—TECHNICIAN

ADAM VONDERSCHMIDT—TECHNICIAN

Contact

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 220
ROBY, TX 79543

RANCH ADDRESS

1262 U.S. HIGHWAY 180 WEST
ROTAN, TX 79546

325-735-506

QUAILRESEARCH.ORG

DR. RYAN O'SHAUGHNESSY

ROSHAUGHNESSY@QUAILRESEARCH.ORG
321.279.6506

*Special thanks to the following individuals
for providing photographs: Katy Hoskins &
Emily Thornock*

A MESSAGE FROM DR. RYAN O'SHAUGHNESSY

Quail managers and researchers today have a strong understanding of the factors limiting wild quail populations across the Rolling Plains and beyond. Habitat loss, changing land use practices, invasive species, disease, and environmental variability all play a role in shaping the future of these iconic birds. While identifying these challenges is often straightforward, developing practical, landowner-friendly solutions remains the true test. Some solutions are simple and immediately actionable, while others require years of research, experimentation, and collaboration to fully understand and implement.

At the Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation (RPQRF), our mission is to bridge the gap between science and stewardship by delivering research-driven solutions that improve quail habitat and populations across Texas. None of this work would be possible without the generous support of our donors, partners, and volunteers who share our commitment to conserving the state's rich quail hunting heritage.

In 2025, RPQRF continued to expand its impact through innovative research, increased outreach, and stronger engagement with landowners and conservation partners. Our research programs advanced understanding of quail habitat management, parasite ecology, and population dynamics, while our outreach efforts connected thousands of landowners, hunters, students, and conservationists with the latest science-based management recommendations.

We also continued building upon one of the most important milestones in our organization's history—the establishment of The Hawks Family Fund for Quail Research. As this endowment grows, it will provide a perpetual source of funding to ensure that critical quail research continues for generations to come. This investment in the future reflects both the importance of our mission and the confidence our supporters place in the work being conducted across the Rolling Plains.

The following report highlights the accomplishments, partnerships, and discoveries that defined 2025. From research conducted in the field and laboratory to habitat consultations spanning tens of thousands of acres, every effort reflects our commitment to ensuring that future generations can experience the unique traditions and opportunities associated with wild quail hunting in Texas.

Thank you for your continued support of the Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation. Together, we are creating a stronger future for quail, the landscapes they depend upon, and the people who cherish them.



Dr. Ryan O'Shaughnessy, PhD, MBA

Executive Director, RPQRF

LONG-TERM DATA COLLECTION AT THE ROLLING PLAINS QUAIL RESEARCH RANCH

The Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch was established in 2006 through a generous gift from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Conservation Fund. It serves as a dedicated research and education facility for quail.

The Research Ranch boasts an extensive quail dataset, the most comprehensive in Texas, including records for over 20,000 banded and 3,500 radio-tagged quail. Unlike typical short-term studies, our data spans more than 19 years.

The following content summarize our ongoing, long-term data collection efforts. This extensive data has supported numerous graduate student projects and scientific publications. Our growing body of research is archived and available on our website: QUAILRESEARCH.ORG.



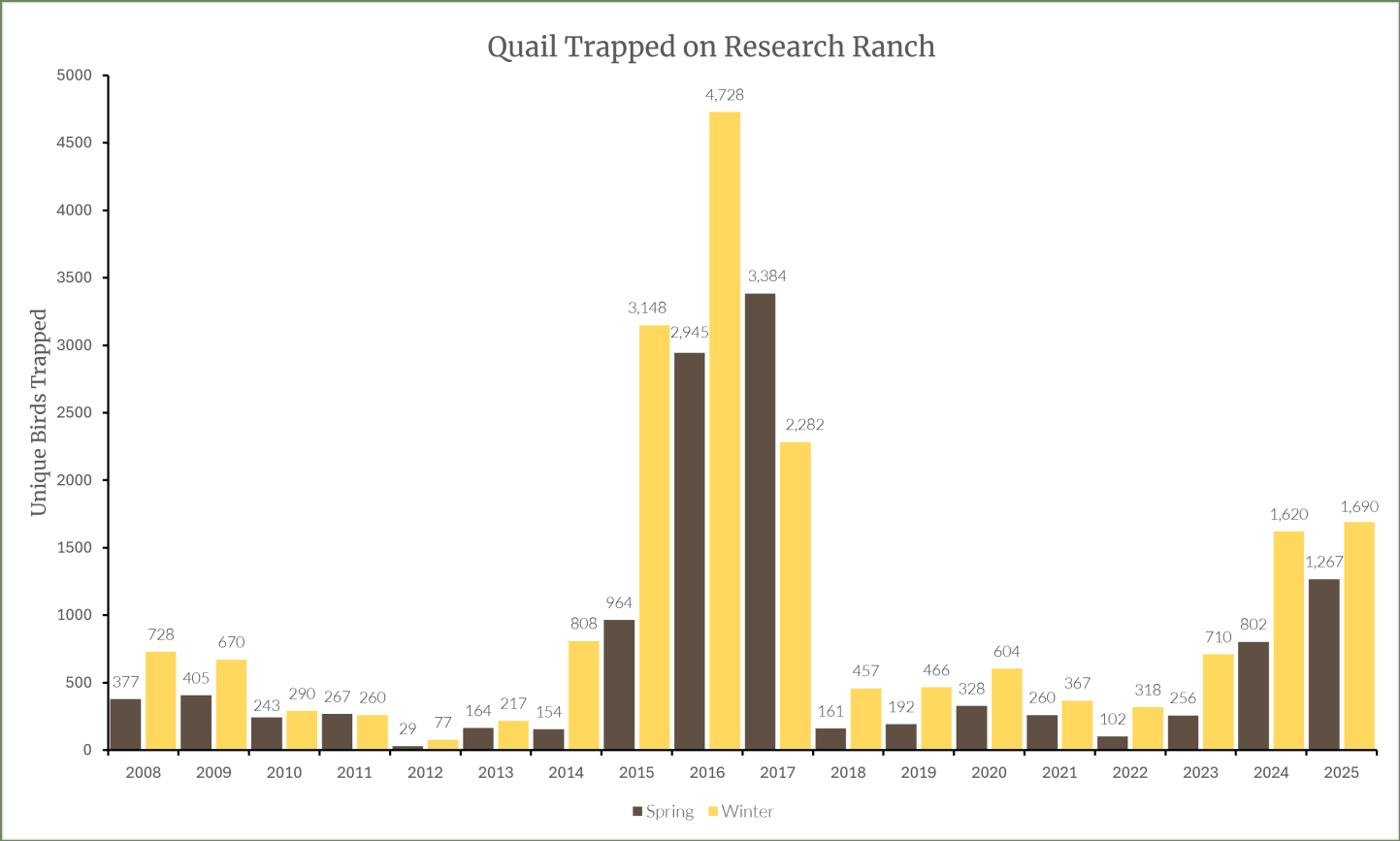
Northern bobwhite with solar GPS tracking collar.

Joseph Richards

QUAIL DEMOGRAPHICS

The Research Ranch utilizes physical trapping to gather key quail demographic data. Each trapping period consists of capturing quail for 12 consecutive days —once in March and then again in December, utilizing 350 walk-in traps placed on the research ranch. Morphometric data is recorded from all captured birds and each bird is given a uniquely numbered leg band. A subset of individuals are fitted with either a 6-gram VHF or 3-gram GPS tracking collar. Quail with tracking collars are tracked daily through the remainder of the year to monitor movement, survival and habitat selection.

Long-term quail trapping data continues to provide one of the most valuable measures of quail population dynamics in the Rolling Plains. The 2025 trapping season marked another year of encouraging population strength, building on the substantial recovery observed since 2023.



During the winter of 2025, research technicians trapped 1,690 unique bobwhites, a 4% increase over the winter 2024 total of 1,620 birds. During the spring 2025 trapping effort, technicians captured 1,267 unique birds, representing a 58% increase from the spring of 2024 total of 802 birds and the highest spring population estimate observed since 2017. Together, these results indicate that the population gains initiated by favorable rainfall conditions in 2023 have continued through 2025.

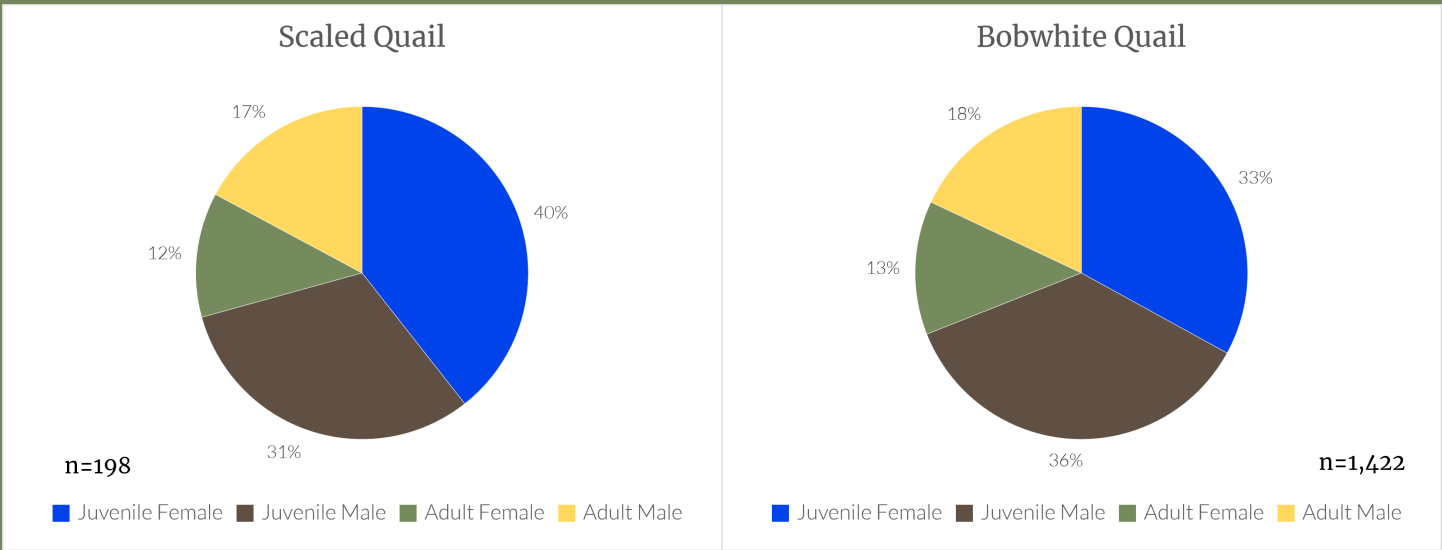
The 2025 trapping totals remain below the historic peak years of 2015–2017, when excep-



tional environmental conditions produced winter captures exceeding 3,000–4,700 birds. However, the current population trajectory stands in sharp contrast to the challenging conditions experienced from 2018–2022, when trapping totals frequently fell below 500 birds and reflected the effects of prolonged drought and poor nesting conditions across much of the region.

Spring trapping numbers were higher in 2025, indicating improved winter survival and the availability of more adults entering the nesting season. The strong winter trapping total further indicates successful reproduction and recruitment during the preceding year.

These long-term datasets underscore the highly variable nature of quail populations in semi-arid ecosystems, where rainfall, habitat quality, and reproductive success interact to drive dramatic year-to-year changes. Equally important, they demonstrate the value of maintaining continuous monitoring efforts through both favorable and challenging periods.

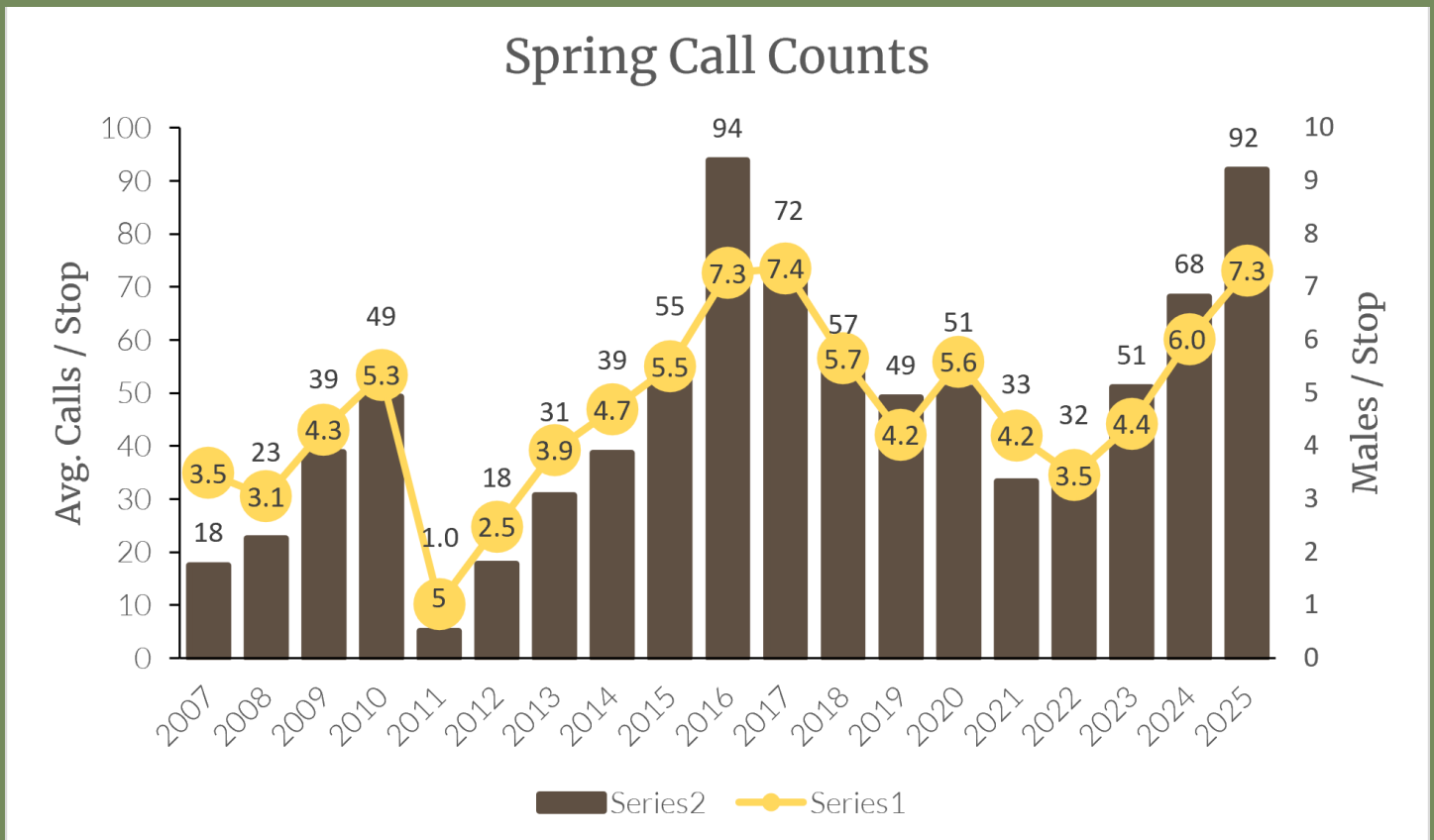


Age and sex composition of quail captured at the research ranch during 2025. Juveniles accounted for the majority of both bobwhite (68%) and scaled quail (62%), indicating strong recruitment into the population.

SPRING CALL COUNTS

Spring whistle call counts provide one of the most important measures of breeding-season quail abundance at the Research Ranch. Conducted annually during the breeding season, these surveys estimate the number of calling males and overall calling activity across the ranch, offering valuable insight into the size and condition of the breeding population entering the nesting season.

In 2025, surveys averaged 92 calls per stop (representing the total number of calls heard, not the number of individual males), a 35% increase over 2024 (68 calls per stop) and the second-highest value observed in the past 19 years. Only the exceptional year of 2016 produced a slightly higher count, with 94 calls per stop. The increase in calling activity indicates that the research ranch entered the 2025 nesting season with one of its strongest breeding populations on record.



The number of individual calling males also remained exceptionally high. Surveys documented an average of 7.3 males per stop, matching the levels observed during the benchmark population years of 2016 and 2017 exceeding the 6.0 males per stop recorded in 2024. This metric is particularly important because it reflects the abundance of breeding males available to contribute to reproduction during the nesting season.

The 2025 results continue a remarkable upward trend that began following improved habitat conditions in 2023. Average calls per stop increased from 32 in 2022 to 51 in 2023, 68 in 2024, and ultimately 92 in 2025. Similarly, males per stop increased from 3.5 in 2022 to 7.3 in 2025, more than doubling over a three-year period. These increases reflect improved overwinter survival and strong recruitment from the previous nesting seasons.

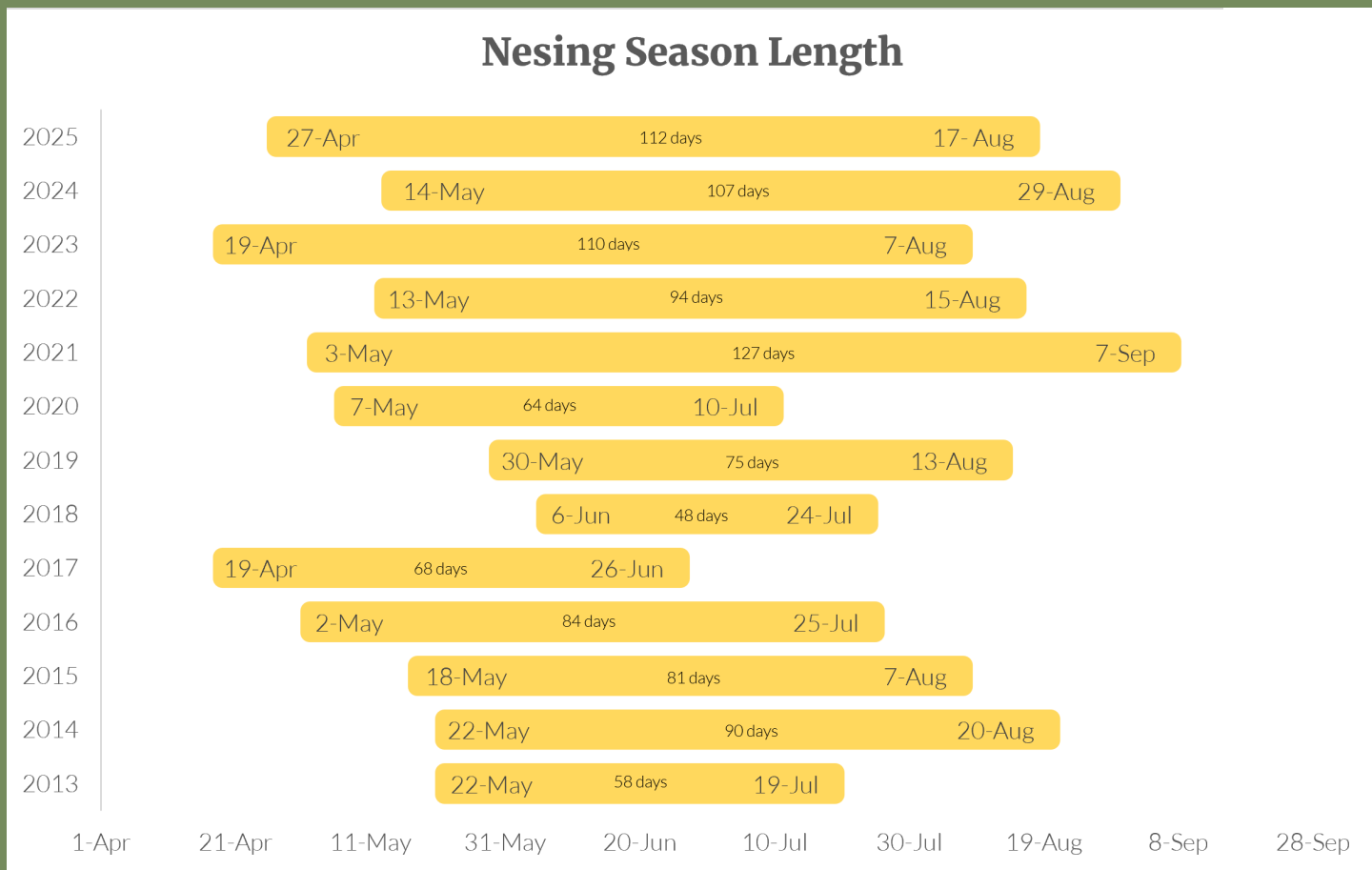
NESTING SEASON SUMMARY

The duration of the nesting season is one of the most important indicators of quail reproductive potential. Longer nesting seasons provide more opportunities for initial nesting attempts, renesting following nest failures, and successful late-season reproduction, all of which contribute to population growth. Research technicians monitor nesting chronology annually to better understand how environmental conditions influence the nesting season and reproductive success.

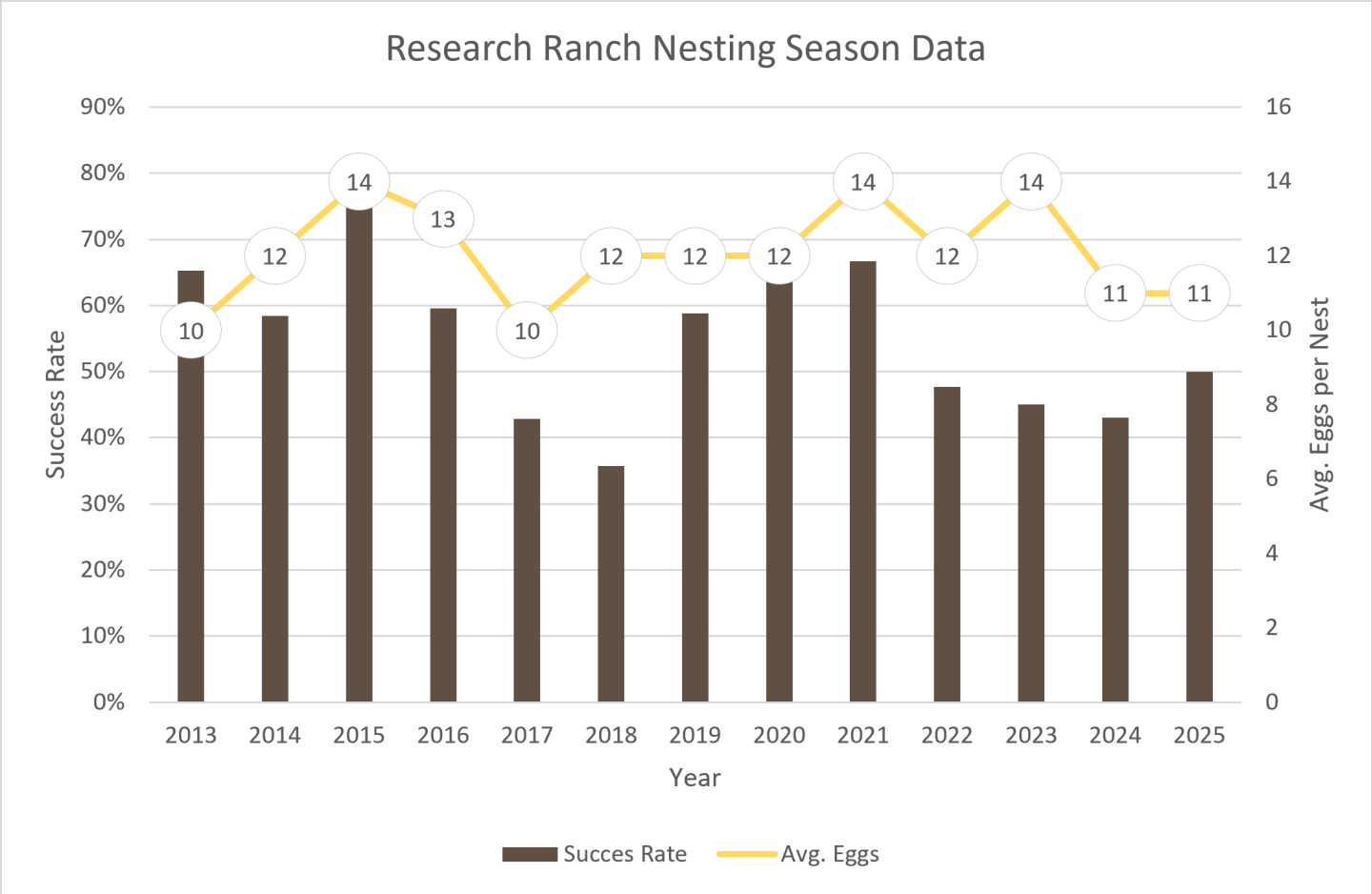
In 2025, technicians monitored 34 quail nests. They documented the first nest of the season on April 27 and the last nest on August 17, spanning approximately 112 days. Clutch size averaged 11 eggs, and 50% of the nests successfully hatched, while the remaining 50% were either abandoned or lost to predators. Of the 34 nests, 31 were incubated by females and three were incubated by males. These observations highlight that while females are the primary incubators, males will occasionally assume incubation duties.

Since 2021, the Research Ranch has documented a series of relatively long nesting seasons, with nesting activity consistently extending into August and, in one year, into October. The 2020 nesting season, for example, lasted only about one month, illustrating the profound influence that timely rainfall and other environmental conditions can have on bobwhite reproduction.

Traditionally, documenting the nesting season has relied on a research technician recognizing changes in a hen's behavior that indicated she had begun incubating a nest. The differences in nesting season length are affected by the technician's effort and ability in tracking and monitoring hen activity.



GPS tracking collars have dramatically improved both the efficiency and accuracy of monitoring nesting activity compared to VHF transmitters, which require technicians to manually locate each bird using an antenna. Documenting nesting season length should improve with advances in technology.





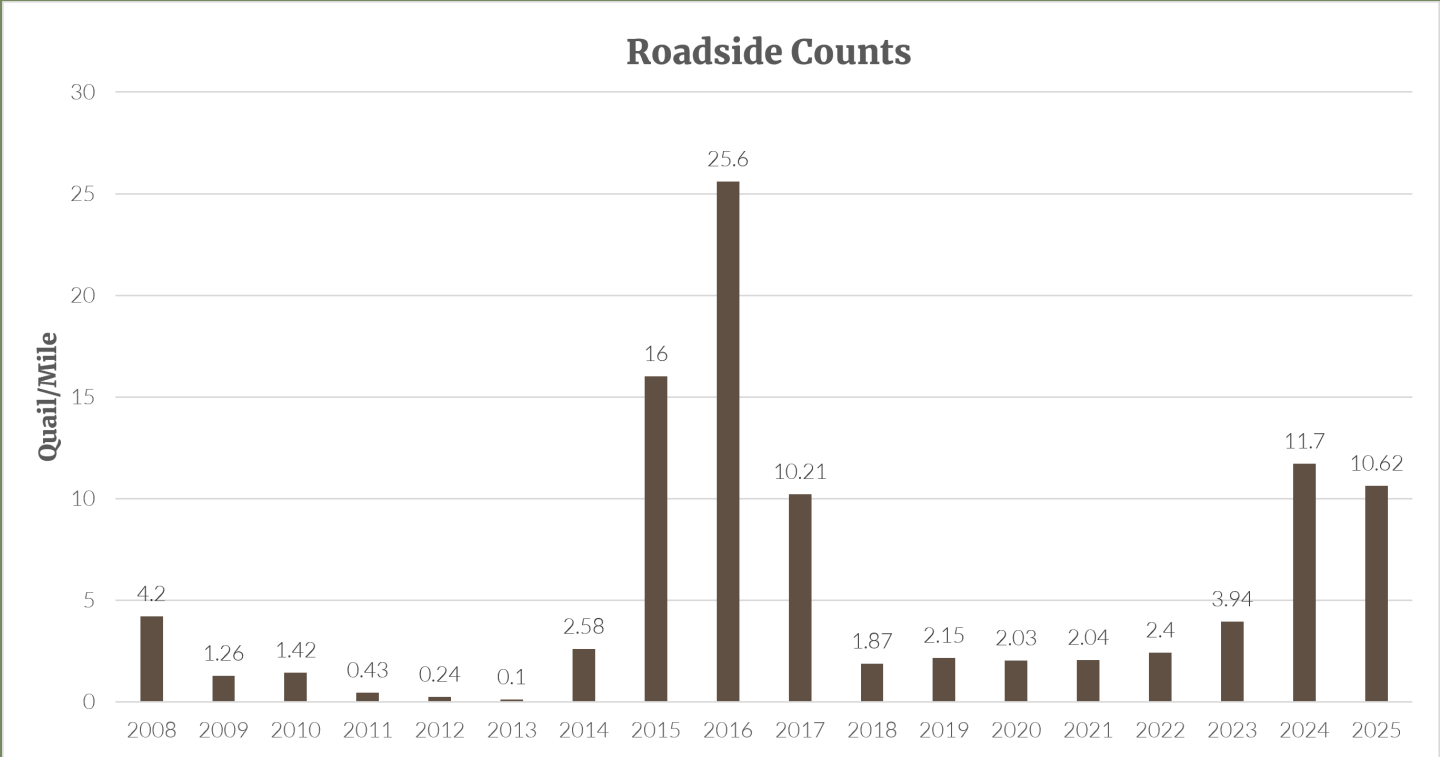
Map of the Research Ranch showing the established survey routes and monitoring points.

ROADSIDE COUNTS

Annual roadside quail surveys provide another important measure of quail abundance. Surveys are conducted annually in September using standardized survey routes throughout the Research Ranch. Surveys are conducted in the morning and evenings using an UTV, driver and three observers to record all quail observed along the route. Results are reported as quail per mile, these counts offer a long-term index of population trends and are a good indicator of the fall population.

In 2025, roadside surveys recorded 10.17 quail per mile, representing the fifth-highest count of the past decade and continuing the strong population response first observed in 2024. Although slightly lower than the 11.7 quail per mile recorded in 2024, the 2025 value remains well above the levels documented during the drought-affected period from 2018 through 2023, when counts averaged only about 2.4 quail per mile.

The improvement in roadside counts over the last two years has been substantial. Following several years of relatively low abundance, counts increased from 3.94 quail per mile in 2023 to 11.7 in 2024. Historically, only the exceptional years of 2015–2017 produced higher roadside counts, including the record 25.6 quail per mile observed in 2016. While current numbers remain below those extraordinary highs, the 2025 survey demonstrates that quail abundance has rebounded to levels not seen since those years.

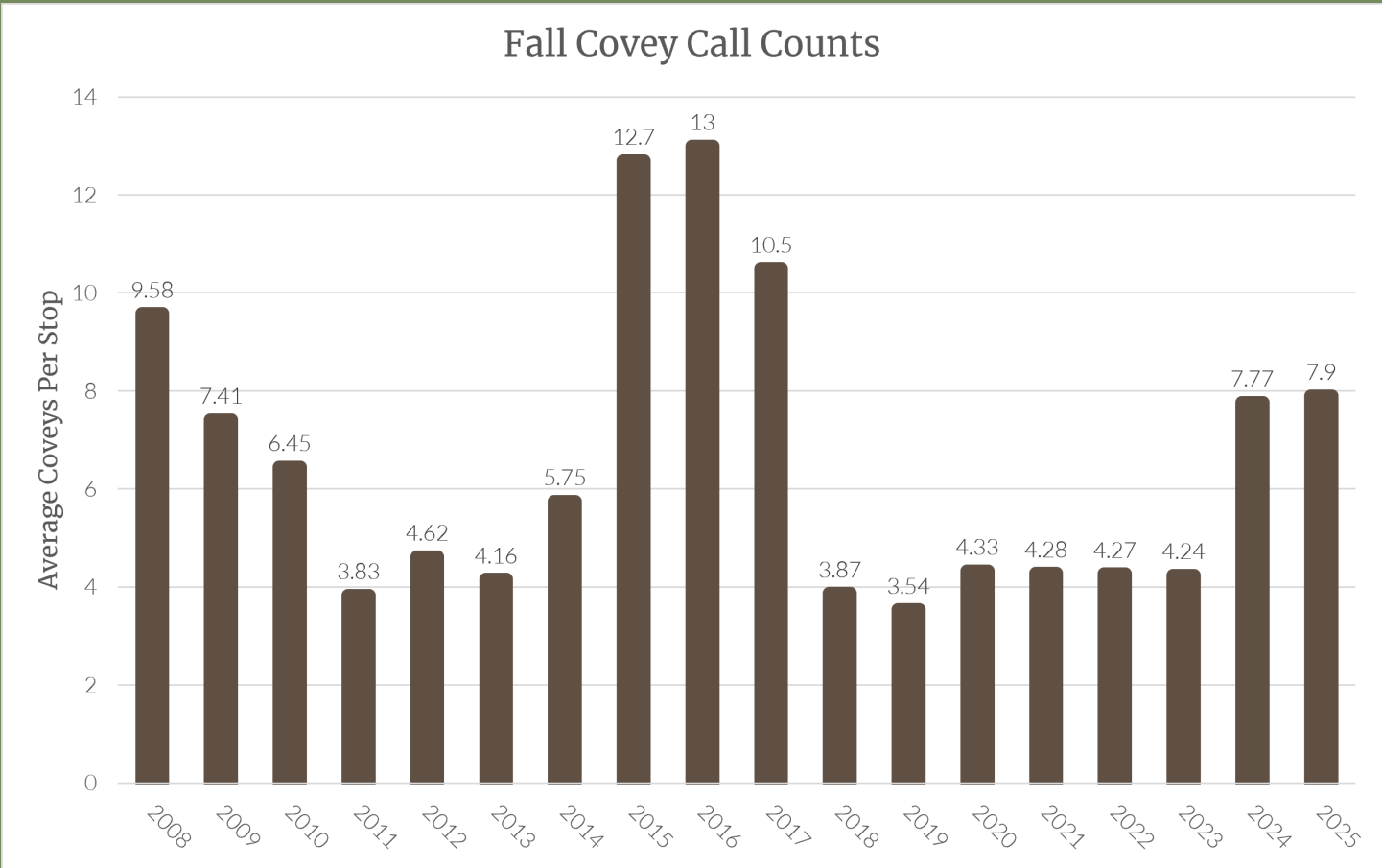


FALL COVEY COUNTS

Fall covey call counts provide an important index of spring and summer reproductive success and insights into the potential quail population size heading into the hunting season and winter. Covey call counts are conducted in October at standardized listening stations. The number of individual coveys heard at each listening station provides valuable data regarding the presence and approximate density of bobwhite coveys in that area.

In 2025, fall covey call counts averaged 7.9 coveys per stop, representing a slight increase from 7.77 coveys per stop in 2024 and marking the highest count recorded since 2017. The 2025 value is nearly double the average observed during the drought-impacted period from 2018 through 2023, when counts ranged from 3.5 to 4.3 coveys per stop. The continued increase in covey abundance provides strong evidence that quail populations across the research ranch have maintained the gains following improved rainfall and habitat conditions beginning in 2023.

While current numbers remain below the historic highs recorded during the exceptional years of 2015 and 2016, when surveys documented 12.7 and 13.0 coveys per stop, respectively, the 2025 count demonstrates that populations have continued to grow. The sustained improvement over the past two years suggests that favorable environmental conditions have translated into successful nesting, brood survival, and recruitment of young birds into the fall population.

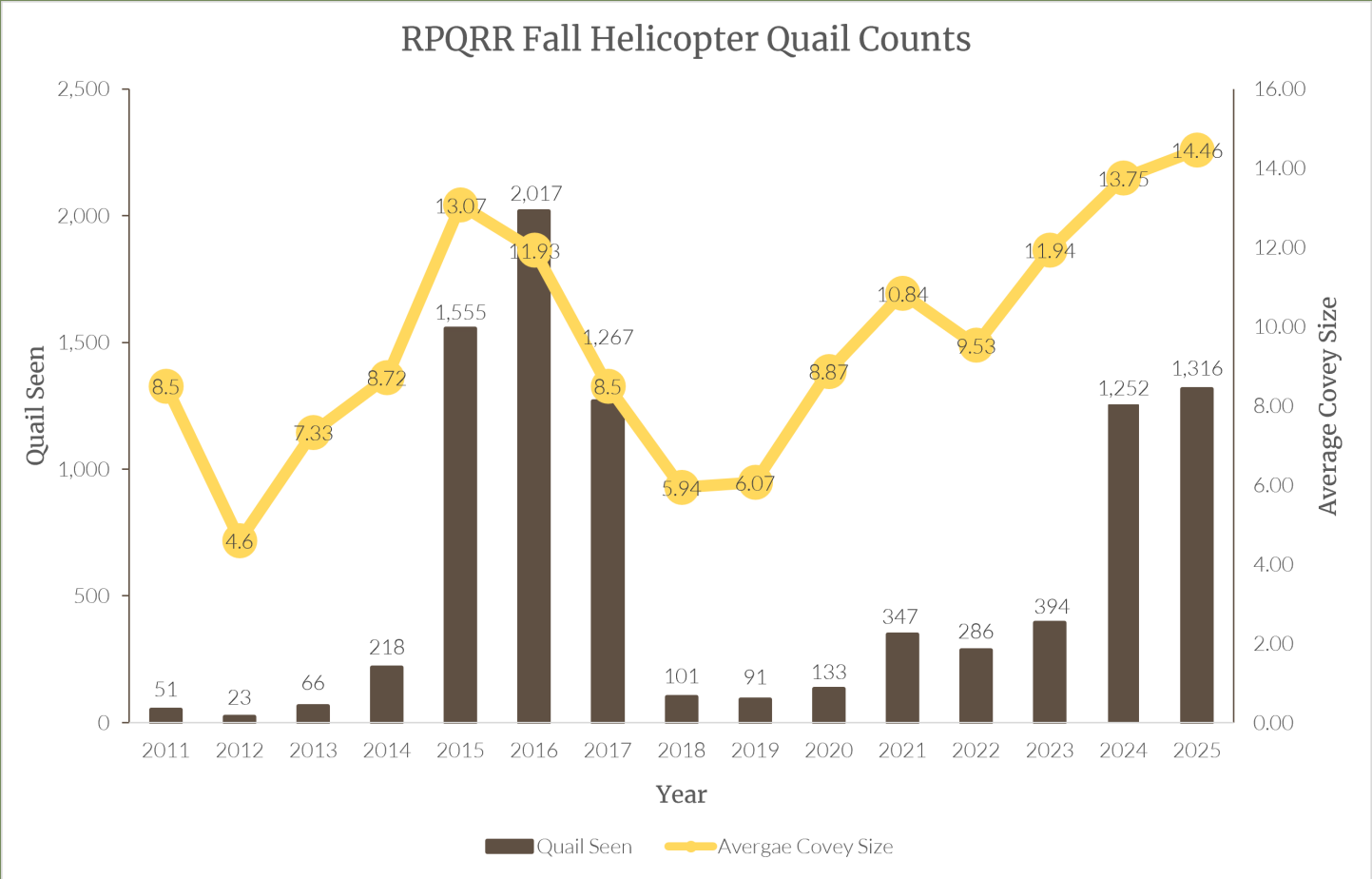


FALL HELICOPTER SURVEY

The annual fall helicopter survey at the Research Ranch provides a unique, landscape-scale assessment of quail abundance and covey structure. Fall helicopter surveys provide an excellent snapshot of quail populations prior to the hunting season. These surveys can be used to estimate quail densities, develop harvest recommendations, and identify how quail are distributed across the landscape. Areas with high quail concentrations often indicate quality habitat, while areas with few or no quail may signal habitat limitations that can be addressed through targeted management practices such as brush management, prescribed fire, grazing adjustments, or native plant restoration. This information helps landowners make informed hunting and habitat management decisions that benefit quail populations over the long term.

In 2025, survey crews observed 1,316 quail, the highest total recorded since 2016 and a modest increase over the 1,252 birds observed in 2024. More notably, the average covey size increased to 14.46 birds per covey, the largest average covey size documented during the 15-year survey period and the third consecutive year of substantial growth. Average covey size has increased steadily from 11.94 birds per covey in 2023 to 13.75 in 2024, culminating in the record-setting 2025 value.

The exceptionally large covey sizes observed in 2025 are particularly encouraging. Larger fall coveys generally indicate strong reproductive output and favorable survival conditions during the nesting and brood-rearing season. The increase suggests that habitat conditions and weather patterns supported successful recruitment and allowed a greater proportion of young birds to survive into fall.



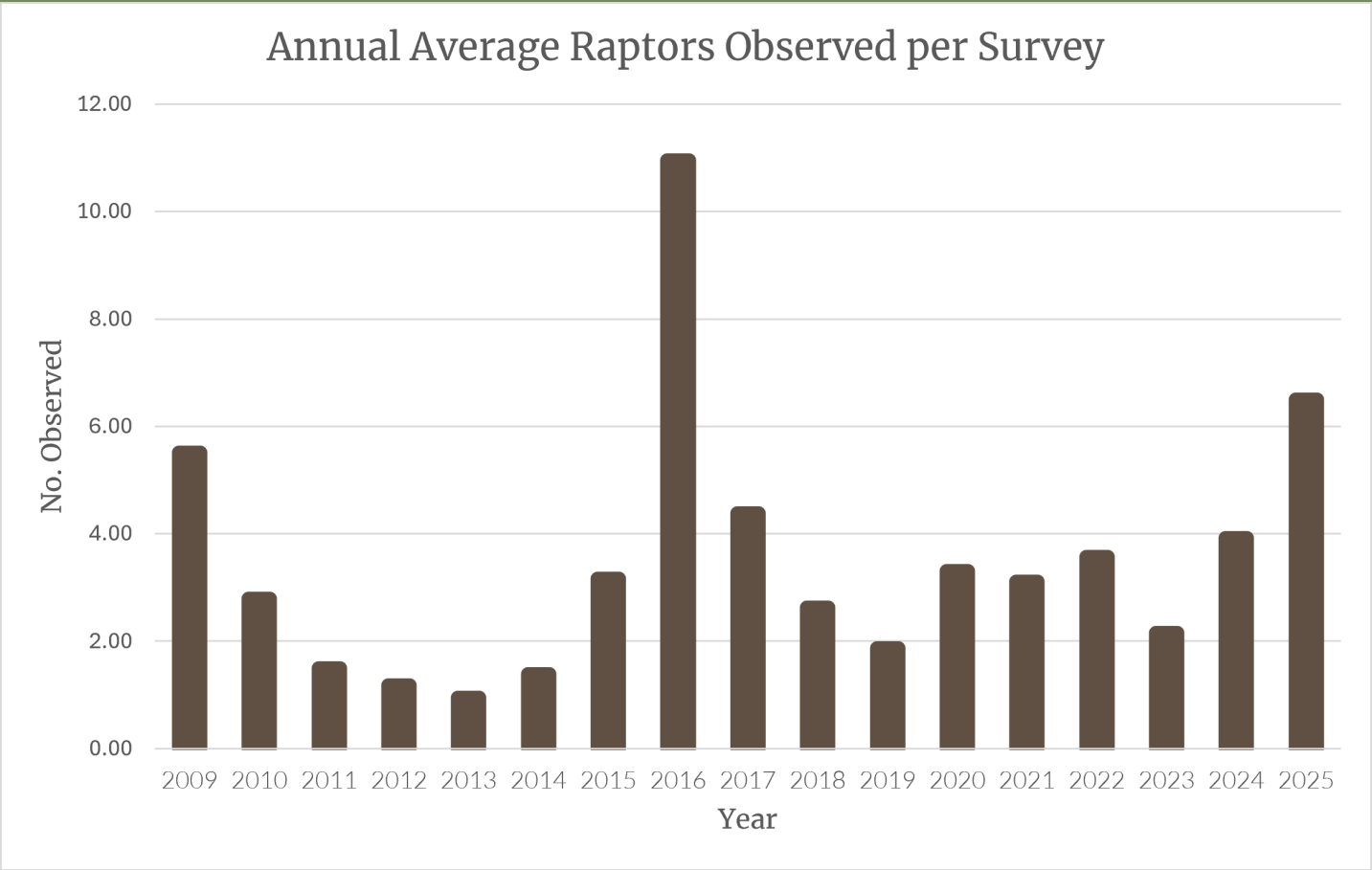
RAPTOR PREDATION OF QUAIL

Avian predation is a major source of mortality for quail, particularly during the overwinter period when raptor abundance is greatest across the Rolling Plains. Understanding the influence of raptors on quail populations is essential for developing management strategies that promote quail survival.

During 2025, a total of 97 quail mortality events were documented at the Research Ranch. Of these mortalities, 33 (34%) were attributed to raptor predation, highlighting the significant role avian predators play in shaping quail survival. Predation pressure peaked during late winter and early spring, coinciding with the highest abundance of migratory and resident raptors and reduced vegetative cover following the winter dormant season.

Raptor abundance and species composition are monitored by conducting twice-weekly late-morning surveys along a standardized 20-mile route on the research ranch. Observers record the number and species of all raptors detected during each survey. Members of the genus *Buteo* were the most commonly observed raptors, with Red-tailed Hawks accounting for 1,526 observations. Although Red-tailed Hawks are not considered specialized quail predators, their presence can influence quail behavior by increasing perceived predation risk and reducing the use of otherwise suitable feeding and loafing habitats.

The second most abundant group was the Northern Harrier, which was observed 1,062 times during surveys. Northern Harriers are among the most effective predators of quail because they hunt low over grasslands and shrublands, using both visual and auditory cues to locate prey. Their hunting strategy allows them to exploit open habitats where concealment cover is limited.



The genus *Accipiter* was represented primarily by Cooper's Hawks, which were observed 73 times during the survey period. Despite their lower abundance relative to Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers, Cooper's Hawks are considered one of the most efficient quail predators due to their agility and ability to pursue prey through dense woody and shrubby cover. This hunting behavior makes them particularly effective at capturing quail in habitats where escape cover is otherwise available.

The kite group was represented by Mississippi Kites, with 30 observations recorded during 2025. Mississippi Kites are primarily insectivorous and are not considered significant predators of quail.

The substantial contribution of raptors to annual quail mortality underscores the importance of habitat management practices that reduce predation vulnerability. Adequate herbaceous cover, residual grass structure, and scattered shrub cover provide critical concealment and escape opportunities for quail. Dense vegetation can reduce detection by aerial predators, while shrub patches and woody cover create structural complexity that disrupts attack trajectories and increases the likelihood of escape.

Long-term monitoring of both raptor and quail populations at the Research Ranch continues to improve our understanding of predator-prey dynamics within the Rolling Plains ecosystem. By integrating raptor survey data with quail survival and habitat-use information, researchers can better evaluate how habitat conditions influence predation risk and identify management practices that enhance overwinter survival. These efforts ultimately support the conservation and management of sustainable Northern Bobwhite and Scaled Quail populations across the region.

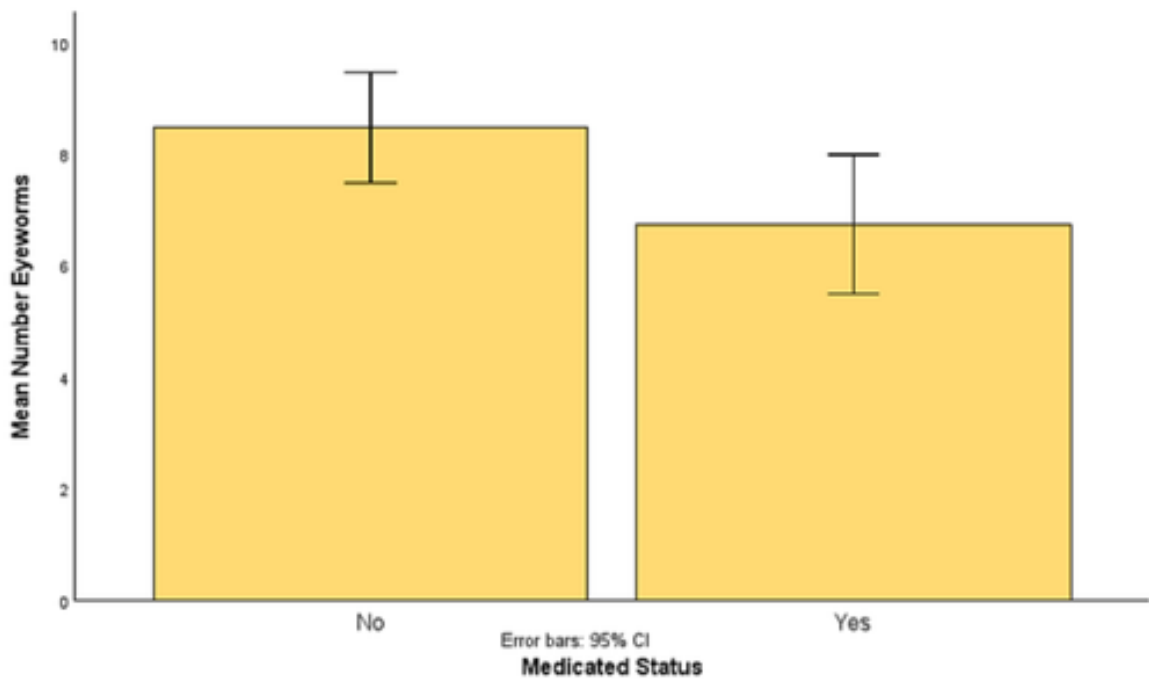


QUAIL PARASITE MONITORING PROJECT

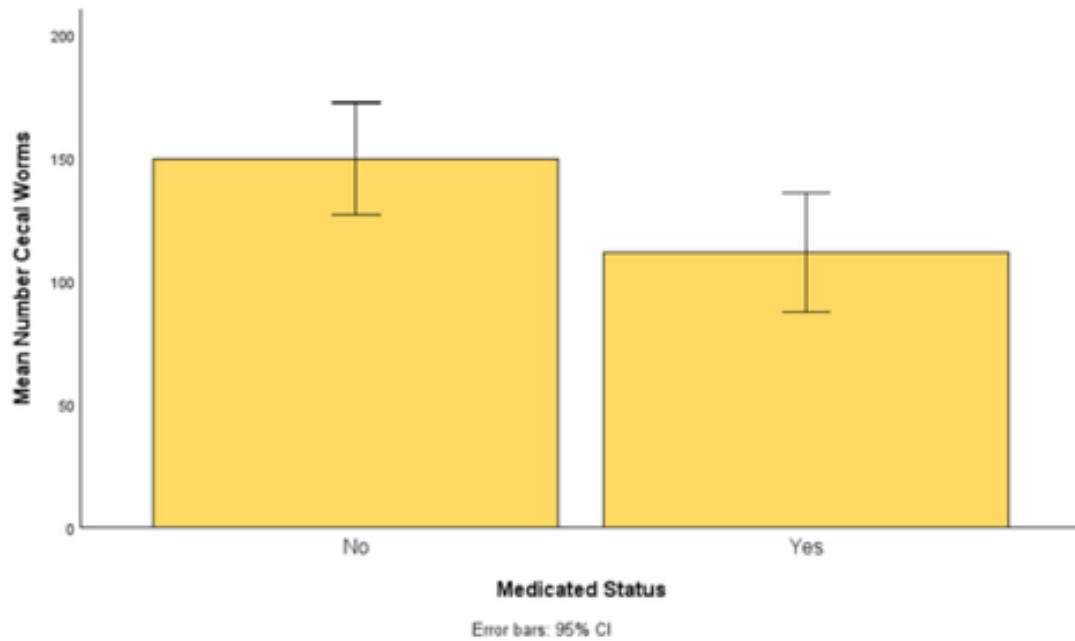
The 2025 Rolling Plains Ecoregion Bobwhite Quail Parasite Monitoring Program evaluated the relationship between medicated feed use and parasite burdens in wild bobwhite quail populations. Samples for the monitoring program were voluntarily submitted from private landowners and Wildlife Management Areas throughout the Rolling Plains Ecoregion.

During 2025 we noted an overall increase in parasite infestations in bobwhite quail across the region. Ranches administering Quail Guard medicated feed had lower levels of eye and cecal worms compared to ranches not utilizing the feed. The difference in eyeworm loads was not statistically significant ($P = 0.093$), but cecal worm infestations were significantly lower on medicated ranches ($P < 0.001$). When data from 2025 were combined to 2024, we see a significant difference in eye- ($P < 0.001$) and cecal worm ($P < 0.001$) loads between ranches administering medicated feed and those not. Parasite loads were significantly lower on medicated properties compared to non-medicated ranches.

Overall, these findings indicate that continued application of medicated feed has the potential to reduce both eye and cecal worm infestation in quail. More research is needed to assess if reductions in parasite prevalence and intensity affect reproductive output and annual survival. Continued monitoring will be important to determine whether environmental conditions, treatment timing, or other management factors influence parasite prevalence and intensity across the Rolling Plains.



Average number of eyeworms per quail on sites where “NO” medicated feed was provided and on sites “YES” that medicated feed was provided.



Average number of cecal worms per quail on sites where “NO” medicated feed was provided and on sites “YES” that medicated feed was provided.



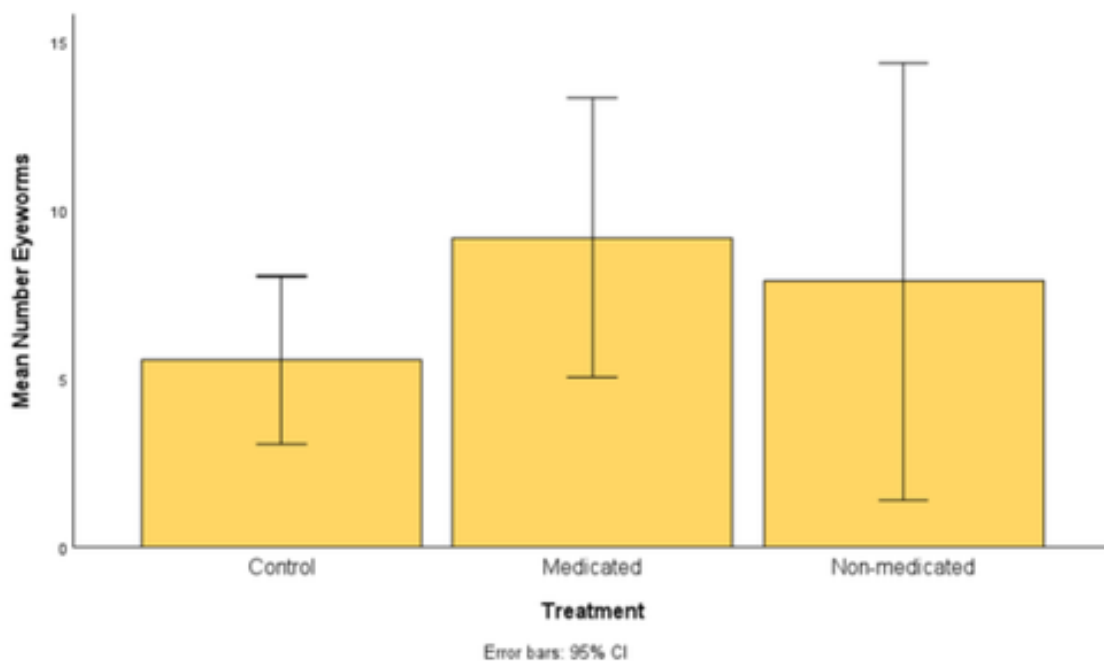
The James R. Curry Research Lab is an integral part of the Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation complex, providing dedicated space and resources to conduct research on quail, parasites, and a variety of other projects that advance our understanding of quail health, populations, and conservation.

MEDICATED FEED RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS FOR 2025

The Medicated Feed Project examined the effects of medicated feed on eye and cecal worm concentrations in Bobwhite quail across three treatments. The treatments are randomized and replicated across three private ranches in the Rolling Plains Ecoregion. This study evaluates eyeworm and cecal worm burdens under a regulated and consistent feeding and monitoring design.

EYEWORM RESULTS

During the 2025 study year, no statistical difference in eyeworm levels was detected. The average eyeworm burdens appeared lowest in the control group and higher in both treatment groups. Medicated birds exhibited the highest mean eyeworm counts, while non-medicated birds showed intermediate levels. Despite these differences, the wide and overlapping confidence intervals indicate considerable variability among sampled birds. As a result, no clear reduction in eyeworm infection was observed in association with medicated feed treatment during 2025.

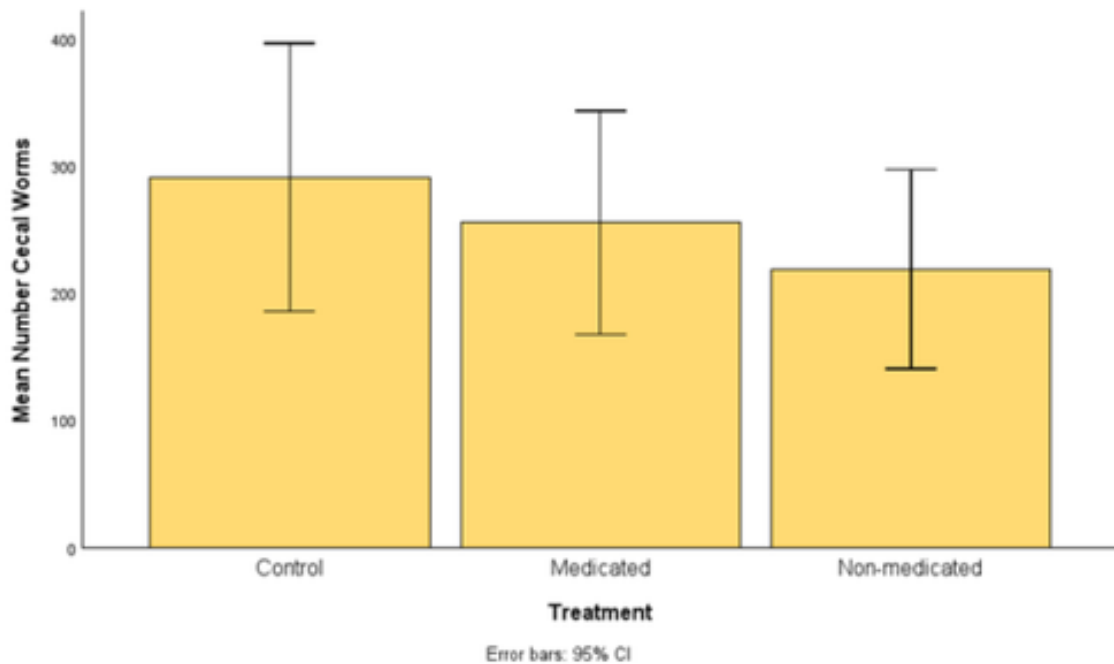


CECAL WORM RESULTS

Similar to the eyeworm results, no statistically significant differences in cecal worms were detected between the treatment groups. Average cecal worm burdens were higher in the control group and lower in both medicated and non-medicated treatment groups. The lowest mean cecal worm count was observed in the non-medicated treatment group, with medicated birds also showing a reduction relative to controls. Although confidence intervals overlapped, the downward trend suggests that feed-based manage-

ment strategies may have contributed to reduced cecal worm burdens. Additional sampling and long-term monitoring will help clarify the magnitude and consistency of these effects.

NOTE: Excellent range conditions across all study sites resulted in low use of feeders in treatments during 2025, potentially reducing a treatment effect. Although early results did not show an effect across treatments, uptake of feeder use was notably low during 2025.



The Park Cities Quail Education Center provides space for educating visitors about the research, monitoring, and habitat management efforts conducted at the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch (RPQRR).

ROLLING PLAINS QUAIL RESEARCH RANCH GAVAGE STUDY RESULTS FOR 2025

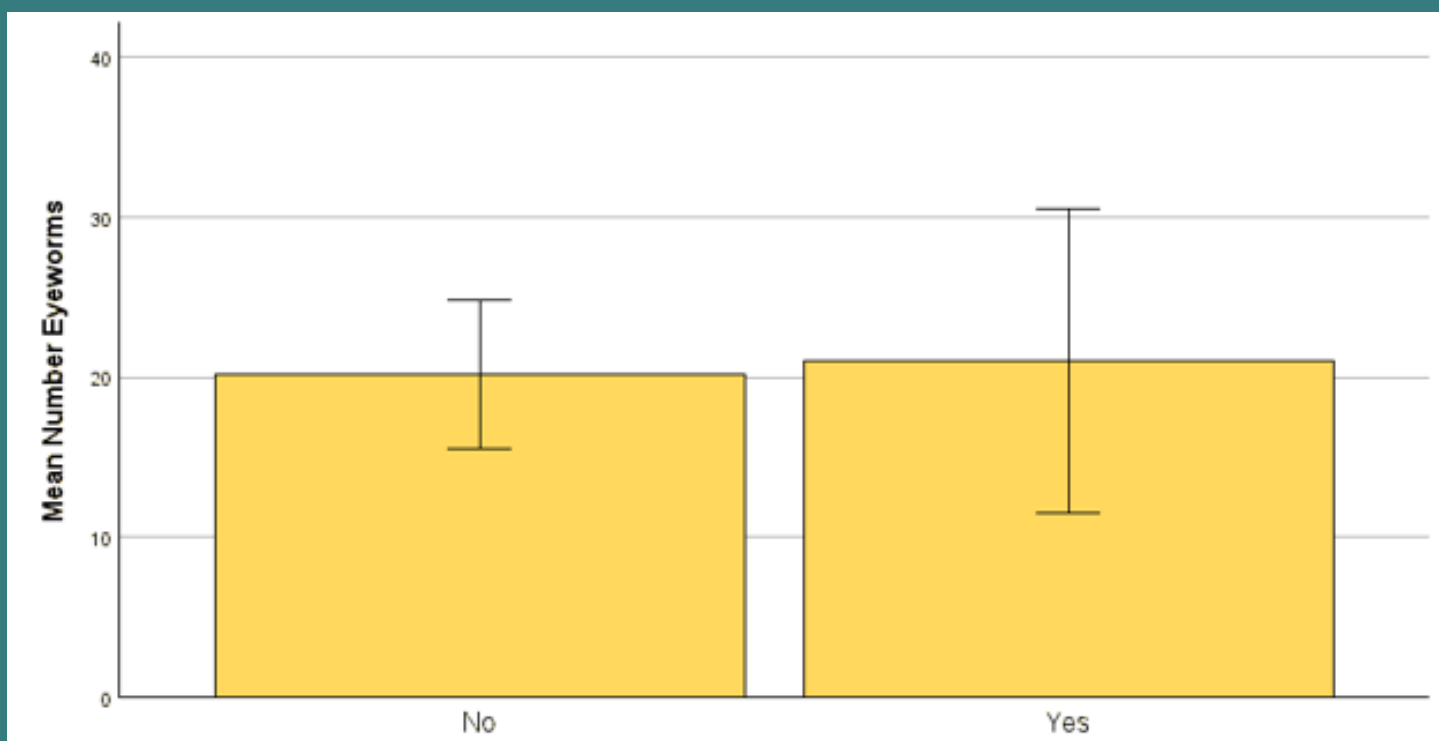
The 2025 Gavage Study evaluated the effectiveness of administering fenbendazole directly to quail for reducing eyeworm and cecal worm burdens. During annual trapping efforts on the research ranch, a selected group of captured quail received a single oral dose of fenbendazole before being released.

Data collected for each bird included species, sex, age, body weight, and leg band number. During the subsequent hunting season, harvested quail were necropsied to quantify eyeworm and cecal worm burdens. Parasite loads of treated birds were then compared with those of untreated birds to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment under natural field conditions.



EYEWORM RESULTS

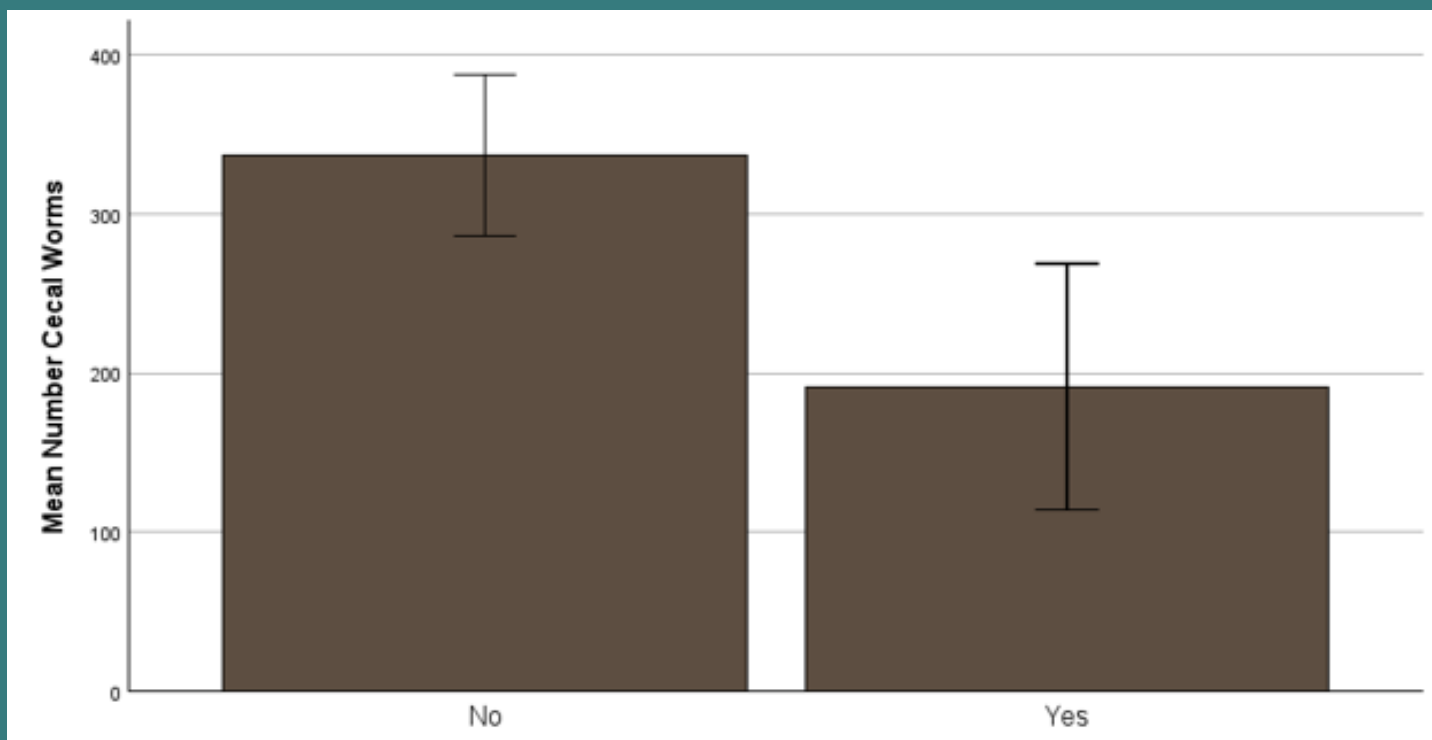
Eyeworm burdens were similar between treated and untreated birds. Birds receiving gavage treatment exhibited a slightly higher average eyeworm count than untreated birds, but the difference was not significant, thus indicating no meaningful difference between the treatment and control groups. These results suggest that the gavage treatment did not significantly affect eyeworm infections during the study period.



With a 95% confidence interval, the gavage technique did not affect eyeworm infections.

CECAL WORM RESULTS

The most notable treatment response observed in 2025 occurred in the cecal worm component of the gavage study. Birds receiving gavage treatment exhibited substantially lower average cecal worm burdens compared to untreated birds. The reduction in mean parasite counts was considerable and suggests that direct treatment administration may be an effective tool for suppressing cecal worm infections in bobwhite quail. Our data indicated that repetitive dosing of quail via gavage can significantly reduce cecal worm burden in quail.



With a 95% confidence interval, the gavage technique did reduce cecal worm infections .

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Across all 2025 parasite monitoring efforts, treatment effects differed by parasite species and management approach. Neither medicated feed nor gavage treatments produced clear reductions in eyeworm burdens. In contrast, reductions in cecal worm burdens were observed in the gavage study. The gavage treatment demonstrated the strongest apparent effect, substantially lowering average cecal worm counts relative to untreated birds.

These findings reinforce the importance of continued parasite monitoring and experimental evaluation of treatment strategies. Additional years of data will be valuable for determining treatment consistency, identifying optimal application methods, and improving parasite management recommendations for quail conservation across the Rolling Plains.

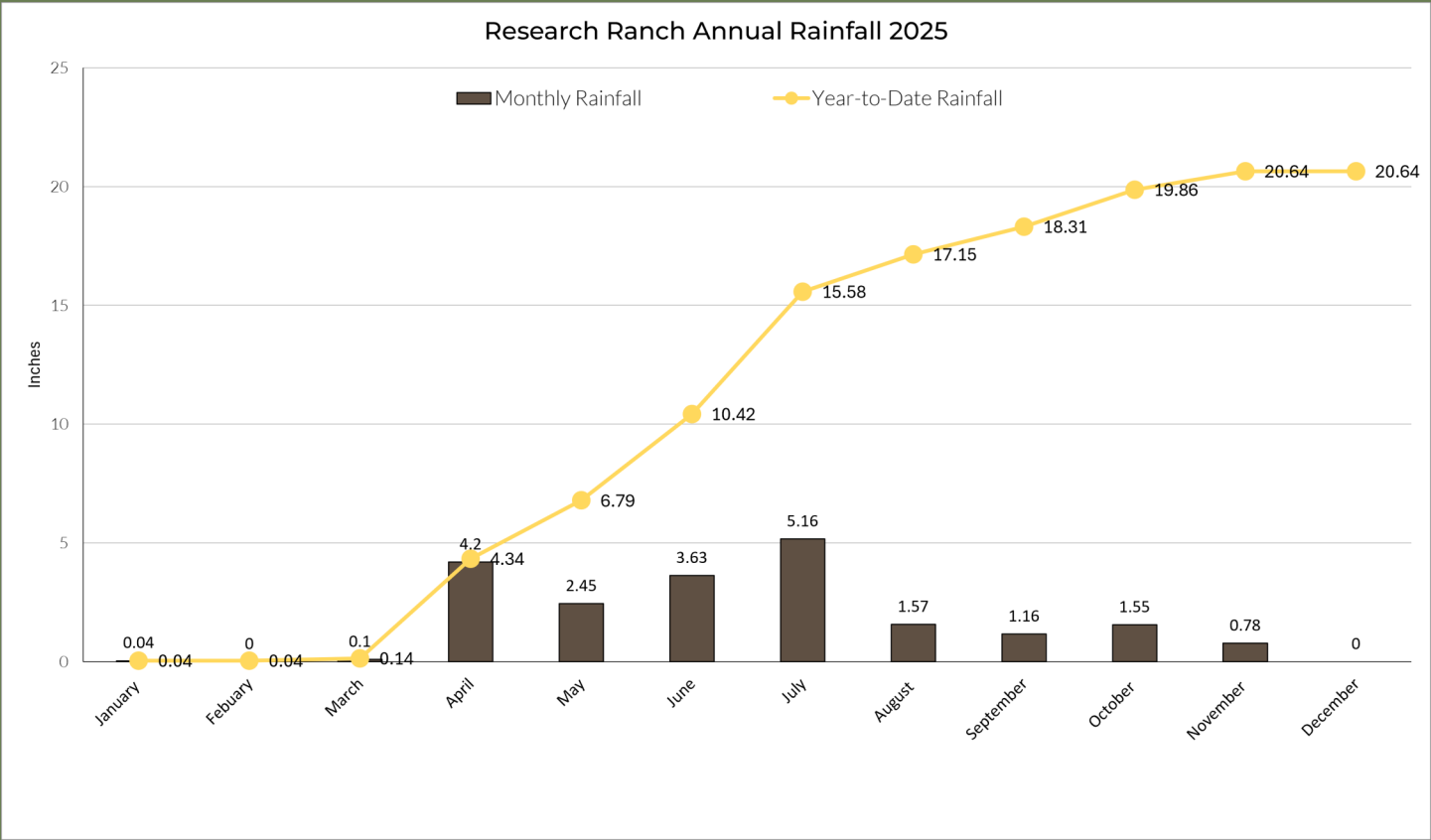
LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE—RAINFALL

The 2025 year began under extremely dry conditions, with only 0.14 inches of precipitation recorded through the end of March. Fortunately, approximately 7 inches of rainfall received during November 2024 helped replenish soil moisture and carried the Research Ranch into the spring in relatively good condition.

Rainfall patterns improved throughout the remainder of 2025, and the ranch received a total of 20.64 inches of precipitation for the year, which was near the long-term average.

The timely rainfall stimulated the growth of native grasses, forbs, and insects, creating excellent nesting cover, brood-rearing habitat, and abundant food resources for both bob-white and scaled quail. Combined with strong overwinter survival and good carryover of adult birds from the previous year, these favorable habitat conditions resulted in excellent quail production and contributed to a successful hunting season.

The contrast between the extremely dry start to the year and the well-timed growing-season rains serves as another reminder that the timing of rainfall can be just as important as how much rainfall is received. For quail, precipitation during the spring and summer growing season has a much greater influence on nesting success, brood survival, and overall population growth than rainfall received during less biologically active times of the year.



HISTORIC CRP FIELD RESTORATION

One of the most significant habitat restoration projects completed this year involved a 130-acre field that was historically enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). When the field was originally established, its primary purpose was to reduce soil erosion on highly erodible land. At the time, the most economical and effective approach was to plant introduced grasses such as Wilman lovegrass and Kleingrass. While these species successfully stabilized the soil, they created dense, homogeneous stands that provided little value for bobwhite quail, scaled quail and other grassland wildlife.

With the CRP contract expired, we began the process of restoring the field to a diverse native plant community. Habitat restoration is rarely accomplished with a single practice, but rather through the thoughtful application of several of Aldo Leopold's classic wildlife management tools, including prescribed fire, grazing, herbicide, and reseeding.

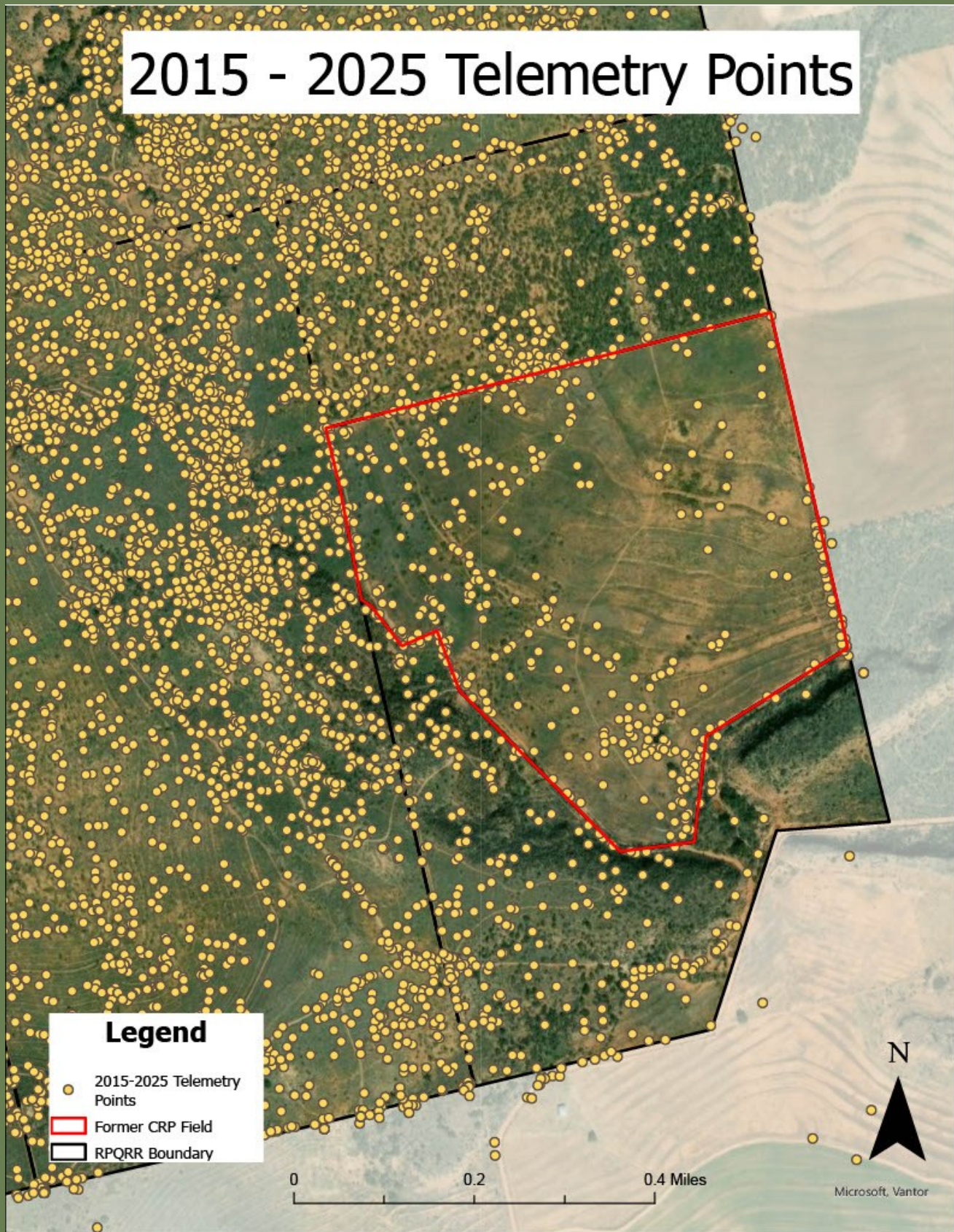
The restoration process began with a prescribed burn in April. Immediately following the burn, cattle were introduced to graze the remaining vegetation that was not completely consumed by the fire, helping reduce residual biomass and prepare the site for additional treatments. After several months of targeted grazing, the cattle were removed, and herbicide applications began. Glyphosate was applied by aerial application in June, followed by ground applications in July and August to control surviving exotic grasses and reduce competition.

Once the site was adequately prepared, a no-till native seed drill was used in December to plant a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs specifically selected to provide the structure, nesting cover, brood habitat, and food resources required by bobwhite quail and other native wildlife. Follow-up herbicide treatments will continue as needed to prevent the remaining exotic grasses from outcompeting the establishing native vegetation.

Native grassland restoration requires patience. A common saying among restoration practitioners is, "The first year the seed sleeps, the second year it creeps, and the third year it leaps." Under normal rainfall conditions, it often takes three growing seasons before newly seeded native plant communities become fully established. While the benefits of this restoration will not be immediate, this project represents a long-term investment in improving habitat quality, increasing plant diversity, and enhancing the ecological value of the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch.



2015 - 2025 Telemetry Points



This map illustrates quail locations collected through telemetry monitoring from 2015–2025 on the Research Ranch. The pasture outlined in red, is a former CRP field that is currently being restored to a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs. Prior to restoration, telemetry data showed that quail made very little use of this pasture because it lacked the habitat components necessary to support nesting and brood rearing.

OTHER RESTORATION PROJECTS

In addition to the CRP restoration project, restoration efforts were initiated on approximately 85 acres of former cropland across the Research Ranch. These fallow fields currently support low plant diversity and provide limited habitat value because of decades of cultivation. Years of farming have largely depleted the native seed bank, making natural recovery slow and unlikely without active restoration.

To begin the restoration process, a winter wheat cover crop was planted in December 2025. The cover crop serves several important functions, including protecting exposed soils from erosion, reducing weed pressure, improving soil health, and adding organic matter as it decomposes. These improvements will help create favorable conditions for establishing native vegetation.

The wheat cover crop will be terminated with herbicide in the spring of 2026, after which the fields will be seeded with a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs. Once established, these restored plant communities will provide improved nesting cover, brood-rearing habitat, and food resources for bobwhite quail and other grassland wildlife, while also enhancing soil health, water infiltration, and overall ecosystem resilience.

Like all native grassland restoration efforts, these projects require time and continued management. However, they represent an important long-term investment in restoring the ecological function and habitat diversity of the Research Ranch.

WOODY SPECIES CONTROL

Maintaining the proper balance of woody vegetation is essential for sustaining high-quality bobwhite quail habitat. While woody plants provide valuable food resources, nesting cover, loafing cover, and protection from predators, excessive woody cover reduces native grass and forb production, limits plant diversity, and degrades habitat quality. Our management philosophy is not to eliminate woody species, but to maintain them at levels that maximize wildlife habitat and overall rangeland health.

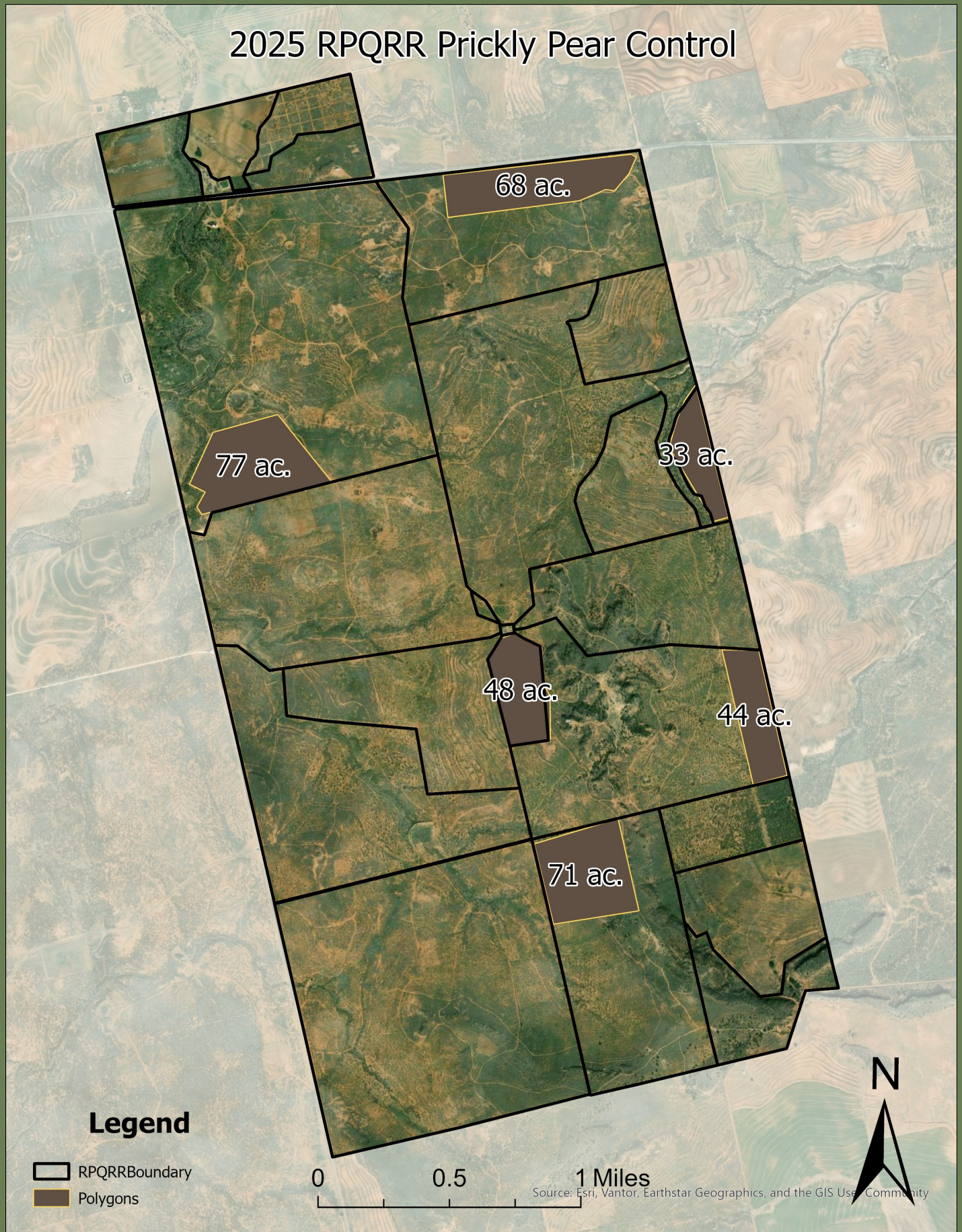
PRICKLY PEAR

Prickly pear is an important component of quail habitat, providing food, nesting, and escape cover. However, dense stands can outcompete native grasses and forbs that provide critical nesting habitat and brood-rearing cover. Heavy infestations can also reduce livestock forage production and make it difficult to navigate while hunting.

Each year, we identify treatment areas where prickly pear has become dominant while retaining untreated habitat nearby. Treatment areas are generally limited to 80 acres or less to maintain habitat diversity across the landscape and ensure quail have access to suitable cover while treated areas recover. Prickly pear is controlled using Picloram, an effective herbicide that also temporarily suppresses broadleaf plants. By treating relatively small areas each year rather than large portions of the ranch, we minimize impacts to desirable forbs while creating a mosaic of habitat conditions.

During February 2025, approximately 340 acres of prickly pear were treated across the Research Ranch.

2025 RPQRR Prickly Pear Control



Approximately 340 acres of prickly pear were treated with Picloram in 2025.

MESQUITE

Mesquite is another native woody species that has the potential to provide benefits for quail when present in moderate amounts. If it is growing in the correct structure, it offers loafing cover, escape cover, and produces beans that are utilized by many wildlife species. However, decades of fire suppression and changing land management practices have allowed mesquite to expand across much of Texas. As mesquite canopy increases, sunlight reaching the ground decreases, reducing the production of native grasses and forbs that are essential to bobwhite and scaled quail.

Preventing mesquite from becoming established is far more effective and economical than reclaiming heavily invaded rangelands. During the summer of 2025, we selectively hand-sprayed 600 acres of mesquite across two pastures using 50-gallon UTV sprayers equipped with a mixture of Sendero, surfactant, and blue dye. By controlling mesquite before it becomes dominant, we help maintain the diverse mosaic of grasses, forbs, and woody cover that is characteristic of healthy Rolling Plains rangelands and essential for sustaining quail and other native wildlife.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Education is essential to our mission of preserving Texas' wild quail hunting heritage for this, and future, generations. Throughout 2025, RPQRF demonstrated its commitment to educate others about quail biology and management. Research updates, quail habitat management practices and quail biology were disseminated by RPQRF staff through a variety of channels, including podcasts, social media, newsletters, newspapers, magazines, field days and seminars. Visitors at the Research Ranch in 2025 included youth groups, college students, researchers, resource professionals, universities, landowners, hunters, dog trial participants, donors, members of the press and other conservation organizations.

RPQRF staff organized the Statewide Quail Symposium in 2025, a 3-day event in Abilene attended by over 200 quail enthusiasts from Texas and other states, as well as our Landowner Workshop and Annual Field Day events at the Research Ranch.

Staff also presented at, or had a presence at, numerous events such as the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society, Farm, Ranch & Wildlife Expo, Rolling Plains Bobwhite Brigade, Mason Mountain WMA Field Day, Granite Hills Upland Game Bird Program, Ceasar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute Quail Workshop, Texas Parks & Wildlife Upland Game Bird Workshop, Texan by Nature Conservation Summit, Mill & Lampasas County Landowner Field Day, Matador Wildlife Management Area Cows & Critters Workshop, Quail Coalition banquets, Safari Club International banquets, Quail Forever meetings, and Cattle Raisers Convention.

RPQRF significantly expanded its outreach efforts through various communication channels. A total of 12 podcast episodes, 12 newsletters and numerous articles in newspapers were published in the past two years, disseminating research findings, management recommendations, and general information about quail conservation to a wide audience. RPQRF also actively engaged with the public through social media platforms, reaching an additional 5,000 new followers in 2025 fostering greater awareness and support for quail conservation initiatives.

A strong commitment to education, training, and professional development was demonstrated through the training of over 100 students via field-based volunteer opportunities and internships. These hands-on experiences provide valuable training for the next generation of wildlife professionals and develop interest in quail management, conservation, and research.

Beyond the specific research and outreach initiatives, the organization expanded its conservation impact through a range of direct engagement activities. This included providing educational resources and technical assistance to landowners interested in improving quail habitat on their property. Staff conducted numerous landowner visits, offering tailored advice, and guidance on habitat management practices.

TEXAN BY NATURE CONSERVATION WRANGLER RECOGNITION

In 2025, the Rolling Plains Quail Research Foundation was honored to have the Research Ranch selected as a Texan by Nature Conservation Wrangler, a prestigious statewide accelerator program recognizing innovative, science-based conservation projects that deliver measurable benefits for people, prosperity, and natural resources.

Founded by former First Lady Laura Bush, Texan by Nature selected the Research Ranch as one of its 2025 Conservation Wranglers for its commitment to advancing quail conservation through research, education, and habitat management.

As a Conservation Wrangler, RPQRF received strategic support from Texan by Nature in areas including program management, strategic planning, marketing, metrics analysis, content development, fundraising, and partnership building. This collaboration will help expand the reach and impact of our research while strengthening our ability to provide practical, science-based conservation solutions for landowners and wildlife managers across Texas.

Being selected as a Conservation Wrangler is a significant achievement and reflects the dedication of RPQRF staff. Through this 18-month partnership we gained valuable insight into the role the ranch plays in the Return on Conservation Index and how this can be used to leverage dollars spent on conservation practices that not only benefit quail, but all resources in the Rolling Plains.



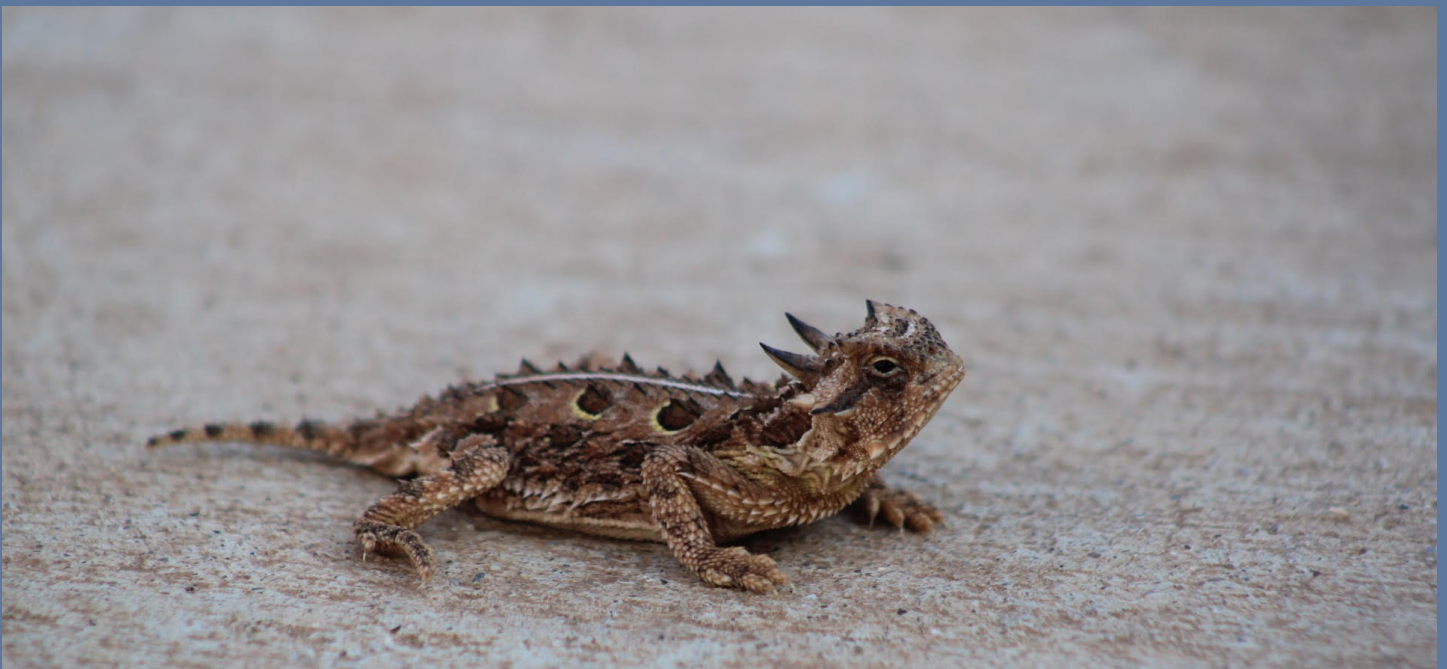
TEXAS HORNED LIZARD POPULATION MONITORING PROJECT BY THE DALLAS ZOO

The Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch continued its partnership with the Dallas Zoo and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department in 2025 on a Texas Horned Lizard Restoration Project, an effort focused on restoring populations of one of Texas' most iconic reptiles.

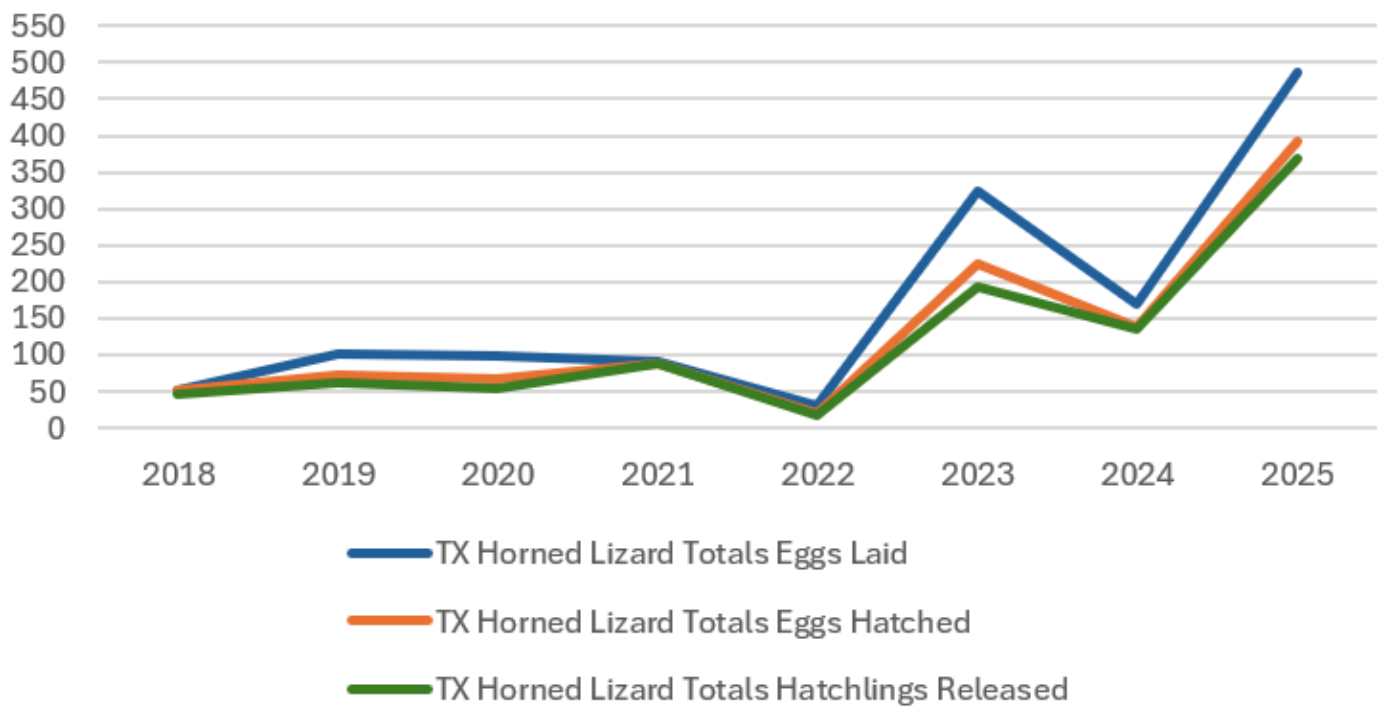
Between April 29 and August 28, 2025, Dallas Zoo biologists conducted horned lizard monitoring activities on the Research Ranch, capturing and collecting biometric data on 120 Texas Horned Lizards, including 38 males, 66 females, and 16 individuals of unknown sex. Data collected on each lizard included sex, snout-to-vent length, total length, weight, capture location, weather conditions, ground surface temperature, ultraviolet index, and the presence or absence of red harvester ants.

As part of the long-term monitoring program, lizards with a snout-to-vent length greater than 60 mm were implanted with Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags, allowing researchers to identify recaptured individuals and monitor survival and population trends over time. During the 2025 field season, 82 lizards received PIT tags, 6 were recaptures from previous years, and 43 were too small to be tagged.

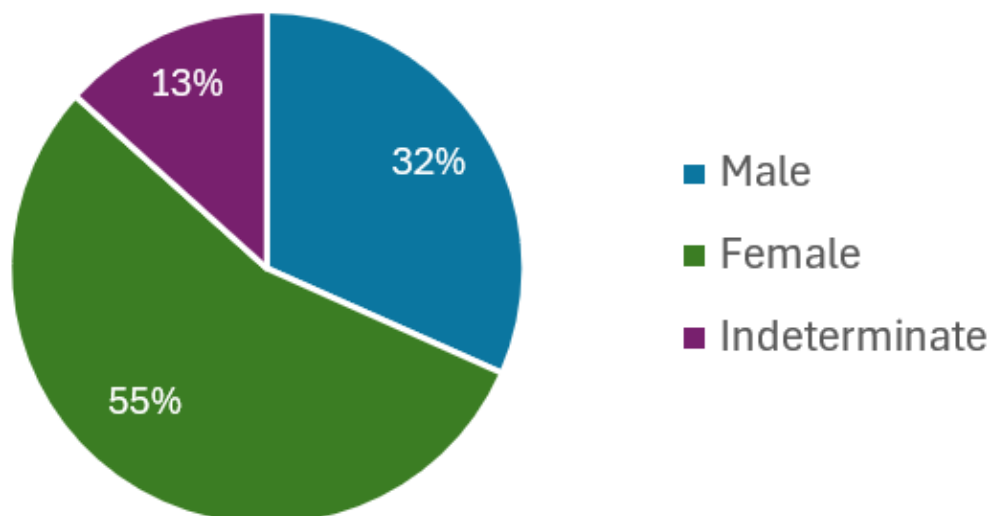
A key component of the restoration effort involved collecting 11 gravid females for the Dallas Zoo's juvenile head-start program. The females were transported to the zoo, where they laid their eggs before being returned to the Research Ranch. Collectively, they produced 409 eggs, resulting in 323 hatchlings that were head-started and released at Mason Mountain Wildlife Management Area during September and October 2025. This collaborative effort highlights how partnerships among conservation organizations, wildlife agencies, and research institutions can contribute to the recovery of native Texas wildlife species. In addition to supporting horned lizard restoration, the project provides valuable information on population trends and habitat conditions across the Rolling Plains. The Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch remains committed to science-based conservation initiatives that benefit bobwhite quail, Texas horned lizards, and the many other native species that share these rangelands.



Dallas Zoo THL Hatchling Headstart Releases



Sex Distribution of 120 Wild THLs Surveyed at RPQRR in 2025



Donor Recognition

ROLLING PLAINS QUAIL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

AMATEUR FIELD TRIAL CLUBS OF AMERICA, INC

MR. DAVID BAKER

BAMERT SEED COMPANY

MS. JANNA BLANCHARD

MR. KEITH BONDS

MS. LINDA CAMPBELL

MR. KEVIN CARIKER

CHARLES V. GREEN FUND

MR. JAMES CHEATHAM

CHIMAL LP.

COMPREHENSIVE LAND MANAGEMENT

MS. DANA KIM CONNOR

MS. MELISSA CRAWFORD

CROSS TIMBERS QUAIL COALITION

DALLAS SAFARI CLUB

MRS. KAREN M. GILL

GORDY & SONS

MR. & MRS. CHRISTINA & KEITH HAFER

MR. TONY HARGISS

MR. JERRY HARMON

MR. & MRS. NEAL & JAMIE HAWKS

HILL COUNTRY QUAIL COALITION

HOSMER LONGORIA FOUNDATION

HOUSTON QUAIL COALITION

MR. JOHN HUSE

MR. MARK KEHOE

MR. ROGER KEY

MR. MASON KING

MR. ROBERT KLASING

MR. & MRS. STICK & ANGELICA LAMAR

LANDHERR CHARITABLE FUND

MR. WILL LASSITER

MR. TIMOTHY LOONAM

MR. CARL R. MCCALLUM

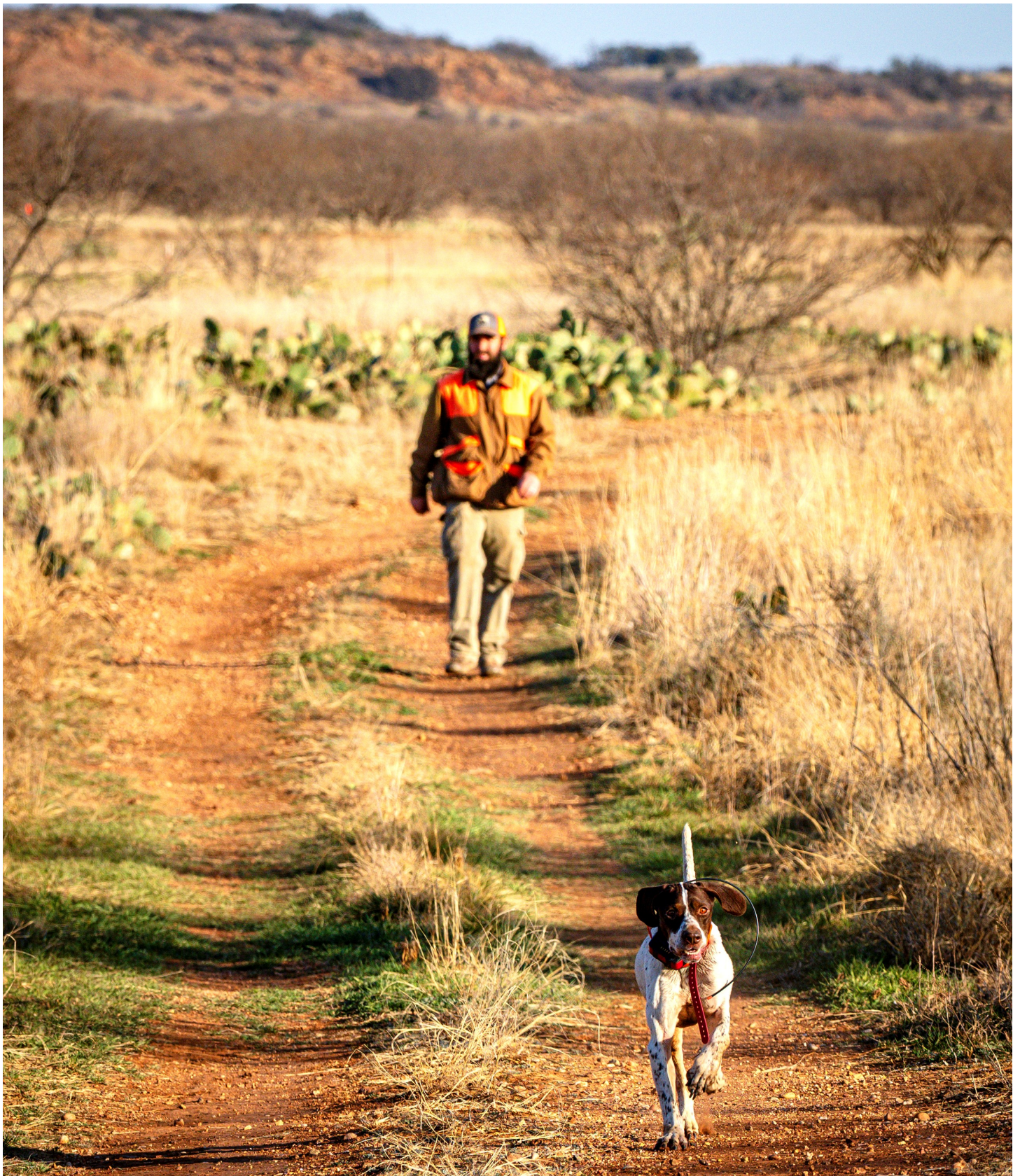
MR. GUY MCCRARY

Donor Recognition

ROLLING PLAINS QUAIL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

MR. GLENN RAY MCCULLOUGH
MR. STUART McLAUGHLIN
MR. & MRS. WILLIAM & PATRICIA MEADOWS
MR. IVAN MESSER
MEWBOURNE OIL COMPANY
MR. & MRS. WILLIAM & SARAH MORRIS
MR. & MRS. KIRK & MAUREEN MORRIS
NATIONAL BIRD HUNTERS ASSOCIATION
MR. DON ONGLE
PARK CITIES QUAIL COALITION
PERMIAN BASIN QUAIL COALITION
MR. GLEN PUGH
QUAIL FOREVER
REGION 7 AFTCA INC.
MR. & MRS. BRAD & MELISSA RIBELIN
MR. JEFF RUTH
SAN ANTONIO QUAIL COALITION
MR. & MRS. WILLIAM & MARY SCOTT
SOUTH TEXAS QUAIL COALITION
MR. JAY STINE
MR. & MRS. HUGH SUMMERS
MR. RANDALL TEINERT
MR. JACK TERRY
THOMAS HICKS CONSTRUCTIONS INC.
TURNER SEED COMPANY
WARREN CAT
MR. & MRS. JAY & CHRISTI WATKINS
WILD WINGS RANCH
MR. RALPH TRENT WILLIAMS
MS. LAURA WILLIAMS
MR. FRED ZAGST





PARK CITIES
QUAIL
COALITION

We especially thank Park Cities Quail Coalition for their significant contributions to RPQRF since our inception. Over the past decade plus, PCQC has provided critical funding that has allowed our research efforts to flourish.

Support Quail Conservation!

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, RPQRF is dependent on the generous contributions of individuals, agencies, foundations, and corporations to make our work possible. These investments are incredibly important for our research and management recommendations we provide for supporting wild quail populations. If you love these birds as much as we do, we hope you'll consider donating – no gift is too big or too small. And thankfully, there are more ways (and reasons) than ever to include RPQRF in your charitable donations.

Direct Donations: The Easiest Way to Give

Our website makes it easy to make an online donation and will even let you schedule monthly recurring gifts to support RPQRF on a year-round basis. If you'd rather mail your gift, you'll find the key details there, too.

For more information, visit: quailresearch.org/donate

RPQRF Endowment Series

Endowments are the lifeblood of many non-profit organizations with long-term visions. RPQRF has launched an inaugural endowment to support all aspects of our quail-saving work. RPQRF is also seeking endowment support to secure each of its organizational tenets: quail research, education, and outreach. Endowments are a great way to honor a donor, family member, or friend while ensuring our quail conservation efforts continue well into the future.

For more information on endowment opportunities, please contact RPQRF Executive Director, Ryan O'Shaughnessy, roshaughnessy@quailresearch.org

Planned Gifts: Ensuring the Future of Quail Conservation

You can give the gift of quail conservation to future generations by including RPQRF in your estate plans. These gifts are not complicated (they can be completed in as little as one sentence) and will help ensure that we continue our mission for years to come. Use the link below to learn how to make a planned gift to RPQRF.

quailresearch.org/planned-giving

The future of our quail requires action now.



