

# Learning to “Talk Quail”

Article and Photos by  
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DR. DALE ROLLINS (left) gives the 2009 QuailMasters class some marching orders during a training session at the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch.

## Back in 1983, I was introduced to a group called Toastmasters International.

AS I WAS ABOUT TO GRADUATE from college and knew my future career would involve frequent public speaking, I had to overcome my fear of the same. If you've never heard of Toastmasters, it's a user group to help improve one's ability to speak, think and listen. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone; after all, whose success doesn't hinge on their ability to communicate their ideas to their peers?

And so it is with a somewhat similar user group — QuailMasters.

So just what is QuailMasters (QM), and why should I care? If you're concerned about the plight of quail, and take their decline personally, you are a prospective QM'er. As a student of quail, you'll learn all about the quail's biology, ecology, management and related politics.

The course, now in its fourth year, is intense — and not recommended for the casual observer. It involves considerable time, travel and sweat to complete the course requirements. One of the common questions after the first session: "Do we really have to do all that homework?" My reply: "Only in two instances; first, if you're enrolling for graduate credit (QM qualifies for three hours) or, secondly, if you want to get the most from your investment of time and tuition."

QuailMasters tour the top quail properties in Texas (and sometimes surrounding states, too). They learn by observing and by doing. They become literate in plants, seeds, and insects important to quail. They learn how to evaluate, and troubleshoot, quail habitat — all of this while surrounded by other students and instructors who share a common interest.

### Dates and locations for the 2011 QM class are:

**Session I** – Apr 30-May 2 (Roby)

**Session II** – June 4-6 (Wichita Falls area)

**Session III** – Aug 20-22 (Location TBA)

**Session IV** – Oct 15-17 (South Texas)

And, yes, attendance is required at all four sessions!

Registration is \$400, which includes course materials, a shirt, and most of the meals during the various field trips. Students are responsible for their own travel and lodging costs. Graduate tuition is available through either Sul Ross State University or Texas A&M University, at additional expense.

QuailMasters is recommended for landowners, land managers, serious quail hunters, agency and private biologists, and anyone else who seeks to immerse themselves in quailology. 🐣

### To sign up for the 2011 QuailMasters.

or for more information, visit the TWA website at [www.texas-wildlife.org](http://www.texas-wildlife.org), or contact

Karla Welch at [karlawelch@gmail.com](mailto:karlawelch@gmail.com) or (281) 468-8475 or Dr. Dale Rollins at [d-rollins@tamu.edu](mailto:d-rollins@tamu.edu) or (325) 653-4576.



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT **QUAILMASTERS**



BILL BARNARD OF WICHITA FALLS examines seed production on a western ragweed plant.

"The QuailMasters program was very beneficial to the general management of quail on the Armendaris Ranch. It greatly increased the knowledge base of the driving issues behind quail reproduction, survival, and the range in vision of habitat quality for those employees most responsible for improving the "on the ground" management of desert quail. This in-service-training opportunity also served to increase the enthusiasm and pride of the employees for their work and allowed the Company to express appreciation for the work they do on a daily basis."

-Thomas E. Waddell, Manager, Armendaris Ranch, Turner Enterprises, Inc.

"QuailMasters is more than just quail -- it's a unique study group for anyone who is interested in wildlife biology, natural resource management, birding, nature studies, or hunting. As a professional in the field of Natural Resources Management, I found QuailMasters extremely beneficial because it motivated me to look outside the scope of my usual focus and challenged me to consider new alternatives when planning conservation improvement practices."

-Preston Irwin, Rangeland Management Specialist, USDA-NRCS

"It's for the birds... Just do it! You'll be glad you did."

-Brad Bates, Land Manager and Hunter, Midland

"The QuailMasters program provided invaluable information that has helped us accelerate the recovery of our ranch back to its native state. Our property had been "grazed flat" by previous ownership, and we didn't know if we could bring it back to a "quail friendly" environment. QuailMasters showed us how, and we are making great strides in our efforts."

-Mike Higgins & Melinda Branchini, Dallas

"I found QuailMasters as worthwhile as any course I've taken as a grad student. The combination of expert instruction, great camaraderie among a diverse group of students, and lots of hands-on time in the field just can't be beat."

-Kurt Huffman, Graduate Student, Texas A&M University

"At the end of the class we are asked to put a value on the QuailMasters program. The small price of investment I have made in this program has brought back to me the best returns of any venture I have ever been involved with. Knowledge, experience, instructors, classmates, alumni, and other participants, make this program "Priceless."

-Jerry Hammon, Friendswood

"The QuailMasters course is quail management from the ground up; you'll learn how to see the habitat from a quail's perspective and manage, accordingly. It is an invaluable experience for quail hunters, managers, and landowners."

-Irvin Welch, Hebbbronville

