QUAIL CALL

2026 EDITION

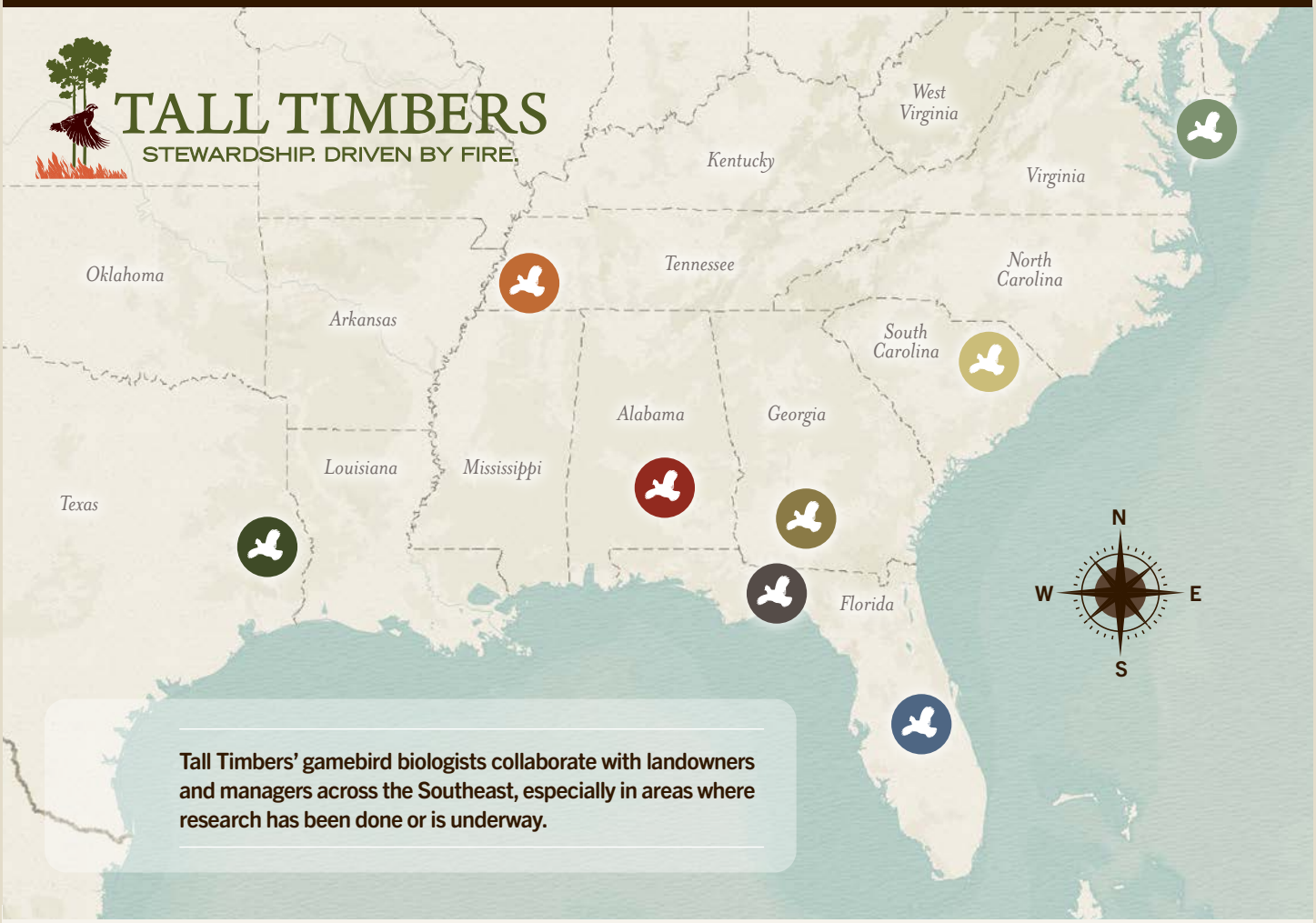


TALL TIMBERS
STEWARDSHIP. DRIVEN BY FIRE.

GAMEBIRD REGIONAL CONTACTS

RESEARCH | MANAGEMENT | TECHNICAL ADVICE | PRESCRIBED FIRE ASSISTANCE

TALL TIMBERS
STEWARDSHIP. DRIVEN BY FIRE.



Tall Timbers' gamebird biologists collaborate with landowners and managers across the Southeast, especially in areas where research has been done or is underway.

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DELMARVA
PENINSULA

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QUAIL CALL

2026

YOUR SOURCE FOR BOBWHITE
RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION.

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“Bird Dog and Northern Bobwhite” By Ron Thomson

This iconic cover art by Ron Thomson is part of a 24-painting collection commissioned by 1915 South to highlight the diversity of wildlife in longleaf pine forests. The collection is on display at 1915 South’s headquarters in Thomasville, Georgia. 1915 South is a family-owned, privately held home furnishings retailer that proudly operates Ashley stores across the Southeast.

Artist Ron Thomson was born in Rota, Spain, and grew up in Florida, where he earned his BFA with an emphasis in painting from Florida State University. He remains a student of the outdoors and clearly relishes learning about each species he paints as he works to represent them in his art. To see more of Ron’s paintings – including the full 1915 South collection – and learn about commission opportunities, visit ronthomsonart.com.

THE MISSION OF TALL TIMBERS IS TO FOSTER EXEMPLARY LAND STEWARDSHIP THROUGH RESEARCH, CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION.

2026 GAMEBIRD TEAM

Our Gamebird team members work across the Southeast
to further exemplary land stewardship.

Tall Timbers Headquarters
William E. Palmer, PhD, President/CEO
Dwayne Elmore, PhD, Gamebird Program Director
Michael Hazelbaker, Gamebird Biologist
Garrett Ake, Research Technician
Katie Schroeder, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher

Albany Quail Project
Clay Sisson, Director
Justin Rectenwald, Gamebird Biologist
Garrett Roberts, Gamebird Biologist
Chase Dittus, Research Technician

Mid-South Regional Program
Alex Jackson, Director
Jonathan Burch, Land Manager at Ames
Nick Thompson, Assistant Land Manager at Ames

Livingston Place Research
Holly Lott, Natural Resource Coordinator
Carolina Luciani, Research Technician

Central Florida Quail Program
Geoff Beane, Director
Amanda Cramer, Gamebird Biologist
Marijean Hankins, Biologist

Central Florida Rangeland Quail Program ***(continued)***
Matt Kunkle, Land Manager at Rollins Ranch/Yeehaw Plantation
Katie Chamlee, Research Technician
Marilyn Ogof, Research Technician

Western Pineywoods Quail Program
Bradley W. Kubečka, PhD, Director
Adam Vonderschmidt, Gamebird Biologist
Jeremy Byrne, Research Technician

Carolina Regional Quail Program
Trey Johnson, PhD, Gamebird Biologist
Kyle Magdziuk, Delmarva Prescribed Fire Coordinator
and Gamebird Biologist
Davis Balser, Research Technician

Alabama Quail Program
Mark Sasser, Gamebird Biologist

Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project
Greg Hagan, Coordinator
Sarah Brown, Public Lands Monitoring Coordinator

Graduate Students
Grace Bellow, MS Student, University of Tennessee
Kirsten Szala-Krotkov, MS Student, Oklahoma State University
Ben Takash, MNR Student, University of Georgia





AN EXPANDED PRESENCE ACROSS THE SOUTHEAST

By Dwayne Elmore, PhD, Gamebird Program Director

Since our founding nearly 70 years ago, Tall Timbers has focused on expanding the use of fire to manage wildlife, including bobwhite. While many people associate us with the Red Hills and Albany regions of Southwest Georgia and North Florida, the reality is that we have always worked across the Southeastern U.S. In fact, Herbert Stoddard, the first Tall Timbers biologist and the father of bobwhite management, laid that foundation in the early days of the organization by traveling far and wide and advocating for forest and fire management that was bobwhite friendly. However, over much of our history, efforts across the Southeast were not necessarily strategic but rather on an as needed basis.

Over the past 10 years, our outreach and research have increasingly focused on additional locations of high conservation concern where we saw an opportunity to make an impact. This led to established programs in the Carolinas, Central Florida, East Texas, the Delmarva Peninsula, and, most recently, the Mid-South. In all these regions, we have seen tremendous success in establishing new bobwhite populations, increasing prescribed fire use and documenting biodiversity gains.

As we contemplate our next 10 years, we need to do even more in these focal regions. This will mean seeking new partners to support our work on both private and public lands. It is not enough to have high density bobwhite on a few properties. Rather, we aspire to have accessible, sustainable, and huntable bobwhite populations well distributed within a short drive of every quail hunter in the Southeast. This will benefit many other species we all care about while providing wildlife recreation to anyone willing to seek it out. This is not a small task, and we will need your help.



> *"It is not enough to have high density bobwhite on a few properties. Rather, we aspire to have accessible, sustainable, and huntable bobwhite populations well distributed within a short drive of every quail hunter in the Southeast."*

While our future looks outward to these focal regions, we will never forget our roots in the Red Hills and Albany regions. These established regions are critically important to maintain as examples of what is possible. They provide tremendous economic benefits to local communities, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and contribute to quality of life for everyone. They are unique, but so too are other areas that historically had bobwhite and could once again. With that in mind, please consider how you can partner with us as we continue to sustain the core bobwhite regions while recreating others across the Southeast.



2026 TALL TIMBERS REGIONAL HATCH REPORT

By Michael Hazelbaker, Holly Lott, Clay Sisson, Justin Rectenwald, and Amanda Cramer

Heading into the 2026 breeding season, our long-term study sites in Albany, Central Florida and the Red Hills were experiencing historic drought conditions, which resulted in challenges, delays and even halting of burning. Initial response by bobwhite to drought conditions varied drastically by region. Bobwhite populations in Albany and the Red Hills had their earliest recorded nest initiations, whereas in Central Florida the breeding season was delayed by a month. The report below highlights how bobwhite fared through the rest of the season and what to expect as the quail hunting season begins.

ALBANY

Spring bobwhite density in Albany was similar to recent years. Following an early start, nesting remained consistent throughout the season. High nest production coupled with good nest survival resulted in a record tying number of broods per hen. We also observed exceptionally high male contribution to incubation and brood rearing, which contributed to the highest total brood production in over two decades at Albany. Well distributed rainfall beginning in May, strong cover growth and what appeared to be an unusually strong reproductive drive all contributed to this high production. Given the data collected, we are cautiously optimistic that bobwhite numbers in the Albany region will be up this fall.

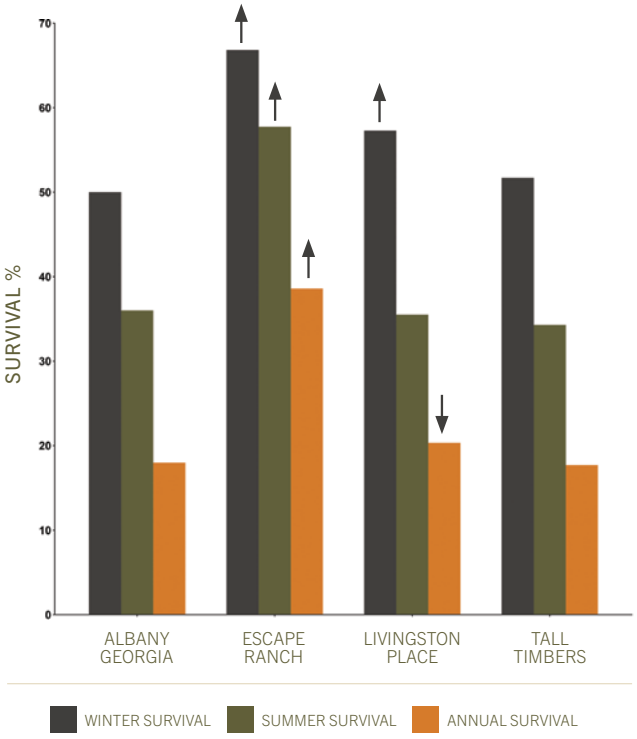
CENTRAL FLORIDA

Above average over-winter survival resulted in spring density improving for the third consecutive year at Escape Ranch, but spring density remained lower than the long-term average. Despite the delayed start to nesting, exceptional breeding season survival helped maintain strong production throughout the season. Above average female nest production and good nest success resulted in strong brood production and a dry summer contributed to good chick survival. Given the high nest and brood production along with great summer survival this year, we expect bobwhite numbers in this region to continue the recent upward trend.



REGIONAL SURVIVAL

Seasonal and Annual Survival of Radio-Tagged Bobwhite on Four Properties in the Southeastern United States



Arrows indicate if this year's data is 5% above or below the long-term site average. No arrow indicates data within 5% of the long-term average.

> ***"We also observed exceptionally high male contribution to incubation and brood rearing, which contributed to the highest total brood production in over two decades at Albany."***

RED HILLS

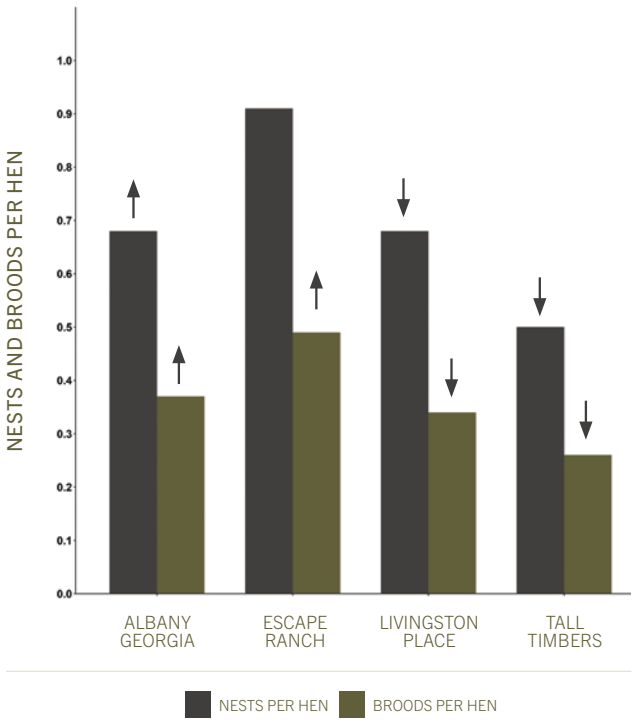
Tall Timbers and Livingston Place both entered the breeding season with above average spring bobwhite density. Despite the early start, neither population had the consistent breeding effort documented in Albany and Central Florida. Nest and brood production were below average at both Tall Timbers and Livingston Place. On the western edge of the Red Hills, ill timed rains in June resulted in poor chick survival at Tall Timbers. These rains occurred during a peak in hatching, where it's important to note that a difference of a few days can influence survival. The eastern periphery of the Red Hills missed some of these rain events, and weather conditions were more favorable at Livingston Place when young broods were on the ground, resulting in good chick survival. We expect bobwhite populations on the western edge of the Red Hills to be down this year with populations on the eastern edge to be similar to last year.

SUMMARY

Due to strong nest and brood production in Albany and Central Florida, we anticipate the fall populations in those regions to be up, whereas we anticipate populations in the Red Hills to be either down or similar to last year. Of course, as always we will need cooperative weather through the fall and winter to yield good hunting conditions. After all, the best measure of a good summer is great hunting in the fall.

NESTS AND BROODS PER HEN

Nests and Broods per Hen on Four Properties in the Southeastern United States



Arrows indicate if this year's data is 5% above or below the long-term site average. No arrow indicates data within 5% of the long-term average.



MOURNING DOVE RESEARCH ADDRESSES STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS

By Alex Jackson, Mid-South Regional Program Director

Tall Timbers has long prioritized stakeholder driven research. About five years ago, managers in the Red Hills and Albany region began asking questions about the local mourning dove population and an apparent decline in hunt success. Tall Timbers responded by working with 13 different managers (including Tall Timbers and Livingston Place) to develop a protocol to trap and band dove.

Specific questions to address included: What percent of the local dove population is harvested annually? Is high early-season harvest affecting local populations in subsequent years? Are locally produced doves staying local or moving south? Are migrant doves from the north contributing to harvest? As dove are migratory birds, trapping required coordination with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the Bird Banding Laboratory with the U.S. Geological Survey.

FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS, TALL TIMBERS STAFF AND LOCAL MANAGERS TRAPPED AND BANDED MORE THAN 1,800 DOVES.

Age Class	Total	Proportion
Juvenile	728	0.39
Adult	884	0.47
Unknown	269	0.14

The proportion of juvenile and adult mourning dove captured from 2022-2025 in the Red Hills and Albany regions. Dove lacking distinctive age characteristics were classified as unknown.

One important takeaway is that the proportion of Hatch Year dove (birds hatched that year) captured in each of the 4 years remained relatively consistent (range: 0.31-0.47), with the highest proportion of Hatch Year birds captured in 2025. These birds likely hatched near the capture location, as trapping occurred before migration. Although this is a snapshot, it is encouraging given concerns about high early-season harvest, as it indicates strong local reproduction each year.

Additionally, we found little evidence that locally produced dove moved far based on band returns and recaptures during trapping. During the 2024 and 2025 trapping periods, a total of 19 doves were recaptured on the same properties they were banded on during the 2022 or 2023 trapping periods. Of the more than 1,800 doves banded, fewer than 150 of these doves were harvested, and most were harvested within a few miles of where they were banded. Accounting for nonreporting bias (banded dove harvested but not reported) and for dove shot but not found, we estimate that between 10-20% of the banded dove were shot each year. This is similar to or slightly higher than national averages and is not a concerning harvest level.

We also analyzed harvested dove feathers to examine stable isotopes to approximate the latitude of origin for migratory birds. The results suggest that a portion of dove harvested (especially during the December season) did originate from areas north of our region and are contributing to hunt success. Therefore, while most of the early harvested birds were locally produced, migratory dove are present, especially later in the season.

So, what do these findings mean for the reported decline in hunting success?

There are several possible explanations, but the most likely is related to the distribution of mourning dove. Specifically, an increase in managed fields and supplemental wildlife feeding (in both rural and urban areas) may be spreading dove across the landscape. Food resources are plentiful in this area. While good for wildlife, it can make concentrating dove more challenging.







PUBLIC LAND OPENS THE GATE: WILD BIRDS CREATE THE OPPORTUNITY

By Bradley W. Kubečka, PhD, Western Pineywoods Quail Program Director

Tall Timbers' new strategic plan emphasizes both sustaining core bobwhite areas, like the Red Hills and Albany regions, as well as expanding bobwhite populations in high potential areas. For decades, many private properties have seen incredible success with focused, often intensive bobwhite management behind those closed gates. However, public lands have generally not offered the same opportunity for high quality experiences for hunters who do not have access to these private lands. Recent research from the Gamebird Program is working to hopefully change that.

First, to demonstrate that hunter access doesn't equal opportunity, we led a recent analysis of quail hunting trends and harvest metrics on the Matador Wildlife Management Area in Northwest Texas from 1959 to 2026. Although not in the Southeast, the characteristic boom-bust quail populations seen in semi-arid rangelands allowed us to evaluate the associations of hunter effort (e.g., travel distance, days hunting), hunter demographics, and quail abundance across years.

We found that hunter effort closely tracked quail abundance. In poor-abundance years, fewer hunters showed up and success was low. During boom years, hunter-days and harvest increased dramatically, and hunters traveled farther to participate. While most (87%) visits to the WMA for quail hunting were from Texas, hunters originated from 43 states and two Canadian provinces, with some of the longest trips occurring during the best quail years. Notably, 98% of non-residents were from the Southeastern U.S., where hunting opportunity for upland gamebirds on public lands is incredibly limited. Mere access to the WMA did not necessarily create a meaningful quail-hunting opportunity. Hunters responded to the number of birds, likely anticipated from August surveys the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department made available.

Second, in East Texas, Tall Timbers' Western Pineywoods Quail Program has worked hard to identify public areas that still hold potential for high-quality bobwhite hunting. In 2024, staff conducted 1,570 surveys across 144 sites in the Sabine and Angelina National Forests to determine if and where bobwhite were still present and, if so, where restoration efforts could be focused.

Bobwhite were detected at 25 sites (17% of locations). Tree cover (i.e. canopy) was the leading predictor of bobwhite occupancy. Sites with about 44% tree cover were 19 times as likely to hold bobwhite (albeit at low density) as compared to the average sites across the forests which had 81% tree cover. This is important as we typically recommend < 30% canopy for bobwhite management. While fire is critical to maintain habitat conditions for bobwhite, we found that fire alone was not enough when the overstory canopy was dense. For bobwhites to respond, these sites need significant tree thinning followed by frequent prescribed fire at the appropriate scale.

Together, these studies show that opening the gate is not enough. Meaningful opportunity requires abundant wild bobwhite and that rests on appropriate habitat conditions. Anything less results in a dog walk, not a bird hunt. By working with agency partners to conduct research identifying remnant bobwhite populations and where restoration efforts can be focused, Tall Timbers is laying the groundwork to turn public access into genuine opportunity.





Acoustic Recording Units are part of the survey methods being used to determine if bobwhite and other bird species are present on a site.

PARTNERING FOR HUNTABLE QUAIL ON PUBLIC LANDS

By Paul Grimes, Director of Public Lands and Strategic Partnerships

For most bird hunters in the Southeast, a covey rise over a staunch point on wild birds is now a memory, a story passed down, or an experience reserved for private land they may never set hunting boots on. Yet many of those same hunters live within a few hours of millions of acres of public land. The land is there. The hunters are still there (for now). What is too often missing is huntable or "recreationally viable" densities of birds.

The Tall Timbers Board of Trustees has challenged our staff to help change that. Our 2026-2036 Strategic Plan sets a clear direction: maintain our core bobwhite strongholds and carry what we have learned there onto public lands across the Southeast.

The target is not habitat acres on paper. It is wild birds in front of bird dogs, at densities that make a day on public ground worth the drive, sustained year after year.

THE STANDARD: ONE BIRD PER TWO ACRES

What does a recreationally viable quail population look like? When the National Bobwhite Technical Committee surveyed 25 state quail biologists, myself among them, there was broad agreement that an average density of at least one bird per two acres is needed to attract and sustain meaningful hunting effort.

Below that density, dogs find too few coveys, hunters eventually stop coming, and the connection between people and bobwhite begins to break. Bird hunters are among the strongest advocates for prescribed fire and conservation. When they lose a place to hunt, the land loses some of its advocates.

A few scattered coveys across a large forest may count as occupied range on a map. But it does not put a young hunter behind a point, and it does not create the next generation of advocates for fire, open pine forests, wild bobwhite, and all of the benefits that follow.



MEASURED BY BIRDS, NOT ACRES

Public land managers already know how to run wildlife recovery efforts this way. Red-cockaded woodpecker recovery was driven by habitat restoration: thinning, frequent fire, and maintaining the open pine structure the species requires. Success was not measured by acres treated alone, but by population response and whether that response is sustained.

Wild bobwhite deserve the same standard applied in a way that keeps hunting opportunities intact. Acres thinned and burned are means to an end. Birds per acre, sustained across years, is the goal.

Additionally, there are other important outcomes that we can achieve with bobwhite as the goal. Fire-dependent species of concern – such as Bachman's sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, brown-headed nuthatch, gopher tortoise, southern fox squirrel and more– depend on the same frequently burned, open pine forests that well-planned quail management provides.









WHY TALL TIMBERS?

Herbert Stoddard's 1924 study of bobwhite in the Red Hills established the importance of fire to bobwhite habitat, and the lessons he and those who followed learned about fire, forest structure, and ground cover helped build the foundation of modern quail management. In 1958, Stoddard helped found Tall Timbers, and that legacy of applied science has guided the organization ever since.

Tall Timbers has worked alongside landowners and managers across more than 1 million privately owned acres in over a dozen states to achieve and sustain recreationally viable densities of wild bobwhite. Our regional programs in the Mid-South, East Texas, Central Florida, the Carolinas, and Delmarva carry that experience into new landscapes.

Tall Timbers has always let science answer the management question, even when the answer is inconvenient. That record is why landowners, agencies, and conservation partners trust our guidance.

WHY PUBLIC LANDS?

Wildlife is held in the public trust, a core principle of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Across the Southeast, millions of acres of public land give us an opportunity to put that principle into practice for wild bobwhite and the people who value them. National forests, military installations, and wildlife management areas include vast acreage of upland forests where bobwhite belong.

The conditions that produce quail –frequent fire, an open forest canopy, and a diverse ground cover of native grasses, shrubs, and forbs– also support a wealth of biodiversity, including other game species, such as wild turkey, white-tailed deer, and rabbit.

The benefits reach past wildlife. Bobwhite management expands the use of prescribed fire, reduces wildfire hazard, increases greater water yields, and supports rural economies through hunting and wood products.

IT WILL TAKE PARTNERS

The opportunity spans millions of acres under different ownerships and authorities: national forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service, refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, land under the Department of Defense, and state wildlife management areas. No single organization can restore wild bobwhite across that landscape.

State agencies play a particular role. They set harvest regulations and manage much of the region's public hunting, so their support is essential to protecting sustainable harvests on and around these lands. Conservation organizations focused on wild turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, bobwhite, bird conservation, and public recreation are all needed. Restored forests serve their missions too.

The goal is not for Tall Timbers to manage all of these lands. It is to facilitate a process, lead with example sites and technical expertise: bringing our science, experience, monitoring, and technical capacity alongside the agencies charged with managing them to help identify and remove the barriers that have kept otherwise suitable landscapes from producing huntable bobwhite populations.

RESHAPING HUNTING IN THE SOUTHEAST

Private lands carried wild bobwhite through the hardest decades of their decline, and private landowners will remain central to everything Tall Timbers does. But private land alone cannot give every hunter the opportunity to experience wild birds. Public lands can.

Imagine if a young hunter did not need an invitation to a private property or a trip across the country to experience a wild covey rise. Instead, they load a dog in the truck, drive a few hours or perhaps much less, step onto public ground, and hunt wild bobwhite at densities their grandparents would recognize.

That experience can change more than a Saturday afternoon. Some of those hunters will become landowners and managers themselves. Others will become advocates for prescribed fire, forest management, and wildlife conservation. All of them will understand firsthand why these landscapes and our public lands matter, and we are ready to get to work. Restoring recreationally viable densities of our game species like bobwhite to public lands benefits all Americans. It will take all of us working together. Please consider how you might contribute to our one million acre goal, and reach out today! Contact Paul Grimes at dpgrimes@talltimbers.org.



Our regional programs have grown over the past decade and are a critical part of our current research and landowner outreach, as well as our planned expansion in the Southeast. Each program has a unique history and structure shaped by local needs, applied research, and the placement of talented staff.



Last year, these programs conducted nearly **500 property visits** across more than **200 properties** in **11 states**. This resulted in nearly **1,700 hours** of direct contact with our stakeholders across tens of thousands of acres. **Site visits help build relationships** and provide precise technical assistance.





ALBANY

The Albany Quail Project began in 1992 through Auburn University as an effort to serve the needs of local quail hunting properties, before joining Tall Timbers in 2008 as our first regional program. Now Albany is considered part of Tall Timbers' core area alongside the Red Hills. Clay Sisson has led the Project since its inception, and he has helped a large collection of landowners achieve some of the greatest quail hunting in the world. These efforts extend into Alabama with work initiated in 2014 on the historic field trialing property Sedgefields, and the 2016 hiring of Mark Sasser, retired Alabama State Quail Program Coordinator, to further expand landowner support. In recent years, Albany has taken on national importance for supporting prescribed fire use as the region became the center of a multi-organization research and policy effort to create tools to improve air quality through prescribed fire smoke management while maintaining the historically high levels of prescribed fire use.

RED HILLS

Beginning with Herbert Stoddard in the 1920s, the Red Hills of Southwest Georgia and North Florida have been a focal area for bobwhite management and research. This tradition continues today, with the Tall Timbers Gamebird Program operating its main activities from the historic Tall Timbers and Livingston Place properties. Dr. Dwayne Elmore directs this central hub with Michael Hazelbaker (at Tall Timbers) and Holly Lott (at Livingston Place). Providing technical assistance to surrounding quail hunting properties throughout the Red Hills and the surrounding area is a high priority, based on decades of applied research that continues today, including collecting the long-term quail data Tall Timbers is known for and initiating new research to address applied management questions. Dwayne, as director of the Gamebird Program for Tall Timbers, also supervises the regional programs.

CENTRAL FLORIDA

The Central Florida Rangeland Quail Program began in 2017 under Geoff Beane's direction as an intensive research and monitoring program to address questions about managing bobwhites in the unique landscape of Central and Southern Florida. While Tall Timbers staff had visited ranches in this region for decades, the program stationed staff at Escape Ranch and Rollins Ranch for long-term research and monitoring. The program included a 2019 wild quail translocation project that brought wild quail back to a site previously limited to pen-raised quail hunting. With philanthropic support from these landowners, the research program has expanded to address a variety of topics, including raptor predation, gopher tortoises, rare butterflies, autonomous tractors, and outreach with other large ranches in the region.

We ultimately measure success by ***restored bobwhite*** *populations and* ***documented increases in population,*** *regardless of location.*



CAROLINA REGIONAL

The Carolina Regional Quail Program formally began in 2017, when we hired Paul Grimes to expand our on-the-ground presence across the Carolinas and Eastern Georgia. After 8 years of growing the program, Paul has accepted a new position at Tall Timbers, where he will lead our public lands work across the Southeast. Dr. Trey Johnson, a former student of the Pineywoods Program, now leads the effort, which currently consults with over 40 landowners in this region, including a focal area around Camden, South Carolina. As a result of intensive management on these properties, they routinely average 2–4 coveys per hour, with a high of just over 8. Successes like those at Spring Mill, host of a 2026 Field Day, and research at Little Hobcaw continue to help new landowners recognize that establishing high-quality quail hunting in new areas is possible.

WESTERN PINEYWOODS

The Western Pineywoods Quail Program launched in 2021 under Dr. Brad Kubecka to bring research and landowner support to East Texas and portions of Louisiana and Arkansas, where bobwhite populations were once vibrant but are now largely extirpated. Our current private land hub is the Gordy family's 9,600-acre Rock Creek Ranch in Polk County, Texas, where habitat improvements began in 2020. We began a wild quail translocation and research effort in 2023, and bobwhite numbers have increased each year since. This success is attracting the attention of other regional landowners, and we are now providing technical advice on other properties to help launch restoration efforts. To further reestablish quail and quail hunting interest in the region, we are conducting monitoring to identify remnant populations on public lands and building partnerships to help restore the forest structure that bobwhite and other species, such as the declining Bachman's Sparrow, need.

DELMARVA PENINSULA

Kyle Magdziuk leads our program in Delmarva, a unique peninsula that includes Delaware, parts of Maryland and Virginia, and sits just east of Washington, D.C. Kyle's position is unique as well, with funding that splits his time between gamebird biologist and prescribed fire coordinator– a good fit in a region where fire use is currently less common. The program started in 2020 and has quickly made connections with a mix of landowners, agencies, and land trusts through site visits and more formalized fire training events. Restoring prescribed fire as a management tool is critical for many species of concern in this region, and Tall Timbers is glad to partner on this endeavor.

MID-SOUTH

Ames Plantation near Grand Junction, Tennessee, has hosted the National Championship for bird dogs since 1915. The opportunity to work with the University of Tennessee to help return this event to running on wild bobwhite is central to our Mid-South program, launched in 2025. Alex Jackson, a longtime gamebird biologist with Tall Timbers, is leading this new program, with additional staff stationed at Ames to support research and the direct implementation of thinning, burning, and other practices needed to restore habitat for wild birds to return. While hands-on restoration at Ames will be a major focus for several years, the team has already formed an impressive advisory board to help guide growth on public and private lands throughout the Mid-South, and multiple private properties are already partnering on bobwhite restoration. Demonstrating the many biodiversity benefits of prescribed fire and bobwhite management will be an important part of our work in the region.

FEEDING THE EVIDENCE: A LOOK BACK AT OUR 7-YEAR SUPPLEMENTAL FEED STUDY

By Katie Schroeder, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher

For many quail managers, supplemental feeding is now a familiar part of a well-rounded bobwhite management program. But this was not always the case.

At the onset of the 1990s, the outlook for supplemental feeding bobwhite was decidedly less optimistic. The prevailing concern was that feeding would concentrate predators and spread disease, while doing little to improve bobwhite demographics. Early research on food plots and stationary feeders had shown weak and variable effects on bobwhite survival and density. Some of those studies also had important limitations, including small sample sizes, short study periods and feeding programs, low densities of stationary feeders, and lack of concurrent habitat management. These limitations prompted researchers with the Albany Quail Project and Tall Timbers to reevaluate supplemental feeding with new experiments and approaches. This included frequent year-round feeding at low feed rates along established linear feed lines. The feed lines resulted in feed being consistently available across the entirety of the property and not concentrated at discrete points. This approach reduced bobwhite concentration, mitigating predation and disease risk, and made the feed consistently available to most animals.

More than three decades later, supplemental feeding has become common on many bobwhite focused properties, and we have accumulated a long history of research and practical experience with the practice.

New analyses from a 7-year feeding experiment spanning 2001-2007 at Tall Timbers and Pebble Hill in the Red Hills are now bringing these long-standing findings, already shared informally with land managers for years, into the peer-reviewed literature. In this experiment, our biologists and technicians followed bobwhites, their nests, and their offspring year-round with banding and radio-telemetry on paired fed and unfed portions of each property. Each January, we banded nearly 800 bobwhites, and over the course of the entire period, we attached over 2,300 VHF radio transmitters to those birds. Further, we banded 2,590 chicks from over 700 nests.

The results were remarkably consistent across multiple demographic measures and provide strong evidence that year-round supplemental feeding can benefit bobwhite populations if done under specific methodology.



DOCUMENTED EFFECTS OF FEEDING ON BOBWHITE

- **30%** Higher annual adult survival
- **21** Days of additional nesting
- **28%** More nests per hen
- **1.6x** Higher hatching rate
- **1.4** More chicks per hen
- **40%** More birds in the fall



Feedlines are designed to meander through habitat quail can use year-round.

Specifically, we found that annual bobwhite survival was higher in fed areas than unfed areas in all but one year, and was overall 30% higher in fed areas. Bobwhite survival was also less variable in fed areas, indicating that supplemental feeding may help buffer populations from year-to-year differences in weather and predation. The difference in survival was evident during both the breeding and nonbreeding seasons. Importantly, despite the abundance of insects and other natural food resources during the summer, bobwhites in areas receiving supplemental grains still had 9% higher breeding season survival than those in unfed areas.

Because reproduction is closely tied to adult bobwhite survival—only live birds can produce offspring—it is not surprising that we also observed increases in nearly every reproductive metric that we evaluated. In fed areas, the bobwhite nesting season began 10 days earlier and extended 11 days later, 20% more hens initiated nests, those hens produced 28% more nests per hen, and the odds of a nest hatching were 1.6 times higher. This resulted in 1.4 more bobwhite chicks hatched per hen in areas with supplemental feeding. Only clutch size and chick survival showed no response to the feed treatment.

Importantly for the manager and hunter, increases in survival and reproduction were accompanied by higher bobwhite density in fed areas. Estimated bobwhite spring densities were about twice as high in areas with supplemental feeding than in unfed areas, equating to 40% more birds in October just prior to hunting season.

Supplemental feeding is only one part of a comprehensive management plan for bobwhite. It is no substitute for adequate cover and other habitat elements. But, the data clearly show that under certain conditions, it can be beneficial to bobwhite. Tall Timbers continues to explore practical management strategies that might benefit bobwhite. Further, we seek to understand the mechanisms that might explain why certain practices may or may not be beneficial. Reach out to us if you have questions about how supplemental feeding might be part of your management plan.



We recommend 1.5 to 2 miles of feedline per 100 acres of bobwhite habitat. In this example from Livingston Place, a 413-acre hunt course includes 6 miles of feedline. When laying out a new feedline, the goal is to meander it through areas quail can use year-round, adjusting the path to avoid seasonally used areas such as fields and wetlands, as well as tractor obstacles like ditches. This typically results in feedlines spaced about 150-200 yards apart, with variation depending on how many areas you need to work around.



Milo is a supplemental food source for quail distributed with a spreader along feedlines. Spreading grain broadly and into cover helps reduce predation and health concerns that can arise when birds congregate to feed while also making it available to all coveys.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ALBANY QUAIL HUNTING LANDS

The story of the Greater Albany Region follows that of the development of Thomasville and the Red Hills to the south, a region which quickly rose to become a premier vacation destination for wealthy northerners chasing warmer weather and cleaner air. As southwest Georgia grew in prominence as the premier quail hunting destination in the United States, others sought similar opportunities nearby, and found fertile fields, a patchwork of large tract ownership, cheap land, and abundant wild quail along the Dougherty Plain. Combined, the Greater Albany Region and the Red Hills make southwest Georgia "The Quail Capital of the World."

For more than a decade, Tall Timbers has worked to highlight the economic value and community contributions of rural working lands and the regional quail economy, a segment of the economy whose contributions are typically overlooked. Partnering with the Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis (CEFA) at Florida State University, Tall Timbers has published two previous iterations of the Greater Albany Region economic impact report, first in 2014 and again in 2019.

This most recent study was completed in 2025 using data from 2024 and is derived from surveys sent to owners of 296,072 acres of quail lands within the Greater Albany Region. Landowner responses to this survey represent 90% (266,693 acres) of surveyed lands, led by Baker County (38%), Dougherty County (17%), and Calhoun County (15%). Economic benefits are yet another reason to support quail management with prescribed fire on rural working lands.

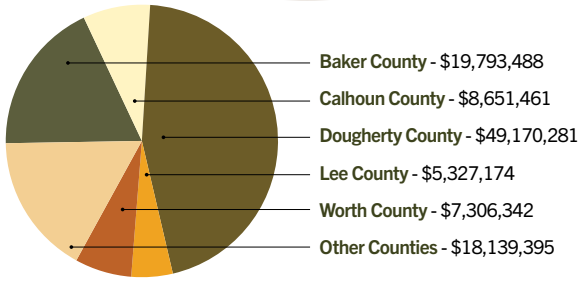
$108.4 Million
Economic Impact

968 Jobs
Supported Locally

$33.4 Million
Personal labor income

4,190
Overnight Visitors in 2024

157,258
Acres managed for wild quail

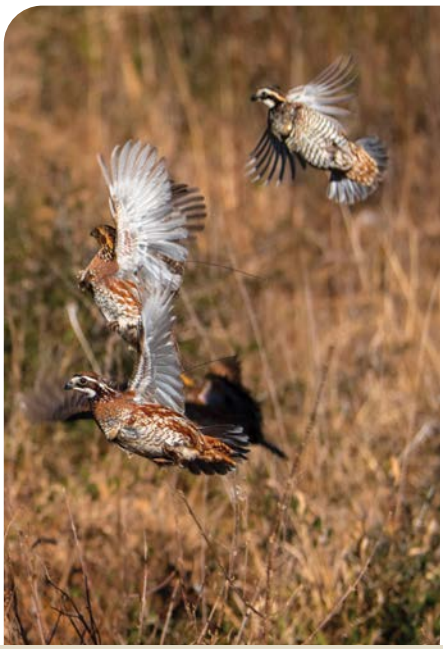


Get the 2024 Red Hills Economic Report

Get the 2025 Albany Economic Report







LIVINGSTON PLACE – AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF BOBWHITE

By Holly Lott, Natural Resource Coordinator at Livingston Place



New housing for interns, graduate students, and technicians is critical to increase research productivity on Livingston Place.

Livingston Place is a historic property on the eastern edge of the Red Hills with a long history of wild bobwhite hunting and field trials. When Tall Timbers was gifted Livingston Place in 2013, the hope was that it would serve as a site for conducting research in the context of a working wild quail property with active farming, timber harvest, and hunting leases. Since acquiring Livingston Place, most effort has focused on necessary land management and improvements that would provide quality habitat for high densities of wild quail on the 9,000-acre property. However, during that time, limited funding and facilities restricted research at Livingston Place. A change was needed to fully realize the property's intent.

In 2025, 1,680 acres of Livingston Place were sold to an adjacent wild quail property to provide much needed funds for investing in infrastructure and site improvements that will greatly enhance the research possibilities of Livingston Place. By selling a portion of the property to the adjacent conservation focused landowner, we were able to avoid fragmenting the landscape. Further, the sold portion is under a conservation easement, ensuring it will stay intact and be managed to maintain its conservation value long-term.

With increased funding available, we have quickly focused on infrastructure improvements to support research. Two new houses for seasonal interns and technicians were completed in the summer of 2026, and a new research lab is currently in progress and on track to be completed in late 2026. These new facilities will allow for unique research opportunities at Livingston Place that are not possible at the Tall Timbers main campus, such as novel reforestation that is conducive to bobwhite management and hunting, how to maintain high quality wild quail field trials, and optimizing biodiversity and bobwhite on a working landscape.

In addition to new facilities, Livingston Place has had several staff role changes over the past year. Eric Staller is now the Director of Land Management for both Tall Timbers and Livingston Place. Holly Lott, the former Gamebird Research Biologist at Livingston Place, is now the Natural Resources Coordinator and Property Manager. In addition to these role changes, the property sale provided funds to hire a full-time research technician at Livingston Place. Carolina Luciani was hired to fill this position in June 2026 and has already been a significant help to the research and long-term monitoring efforts of bobwhite on Livingston Place. These staff changes will help Livingston Place become a site for new research focused on cost-effective ways of managing a working wild quail property while also managing for sustainability and biodiversity. We look forward to conducting new research at Livingston Place while continuing to preserve the tradition of wild quail hunts and field trials.



Carolina Luciani is a welcome addition to Livingston Place in her new role as a research technician.



HUNTING FOR HELP?

Post or explore job openings with private quail hunting properties in the Southeast. Managing world-class land and hospitality supports a variety of outdoor and indoor careers.

TallTimbers.org/Jobs



FIVE YEARS OF GROWTH ON THE QUAIL LANDS JOB BOARD

As the Quail Lands Job Board reaches its five-year anniversary, it has become an important resource for connecting job seekers with unique roles on wild quail hunting properties across the Southeast. Launched in 2021 by Tall Timbers to address a growing workforce shortage, the platform now averages 2,500 monthly page views.

Over the past five years, the board has hosted 345 job postings. The demand reflects the diverse needs of wild quail hunting properties: nearly half of all listings are for skilled land management technicians, 20% are for management-level roles, and the remaining 30% cover essential hospitality and support positions, such as dog trainers, chefs, and housekeeping staff.

Employers report an average of nearly eight applicants per posting, a good response rate for this niche industry. Furthermore, 70% of employers who shared feedback successfully filled their positions and credited the Job Board for its help. Using the service is simple. Landowners and property managers can list an opening by clicking the “Post a Job” button and filling out a short form—no accounts or passwords are required. Tall Timbers staff reviews and posts the listing, and removing a filled job is just as easy.

By showcasing available career opportunities, we can all help attract the next generation of professionals to support these properties. If you have an upcoming opening, please consider using the Quail Lands Job Board to find your next great hire. For questions, contact Jobs@TallTimbers.org.

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TALL TIMBERS UPCOMING EVENTS

18 FEBRUARY
3rd Annual Camden, South Carolina Reception & Auction
Knights Hill - Camden, South Carolina

TBA APRIL
20th Annual Georgia-Florida Turkey Invitational
Leigh Perkins Conservation Education Center at Tall Timbers

22 APRIL
Delmarva Reception & Auction
Historic Hinchingham house on the shore of Chesapeake Bay - Rock Hall, Maryland.

6 MAY
Memphis, Tennessee Quail Coalition Reception & Auction
Memphis Country Club