

2004 August Quail Roadside Survey Summary

by

*Mike Sams, Upland Game Biologist
Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conserv.*

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has conducted annual roadside surveys in August and October since 1990 to index quail populations across Oklahoma. Currently, department employees run 83, 20 mile routes in all counties except Oklahoma and Tulsa; some larger counties have two routes. Observers count the number of quail seen to provide an index of quail abundance (number seen/20 mile route) and reproductive success. The survey provides a crude index of annual population fluctuations. Due to inherent biases associated with the survey results are not meant to be predictive, however, the August survey has shown a positive correlation to quail harvest.

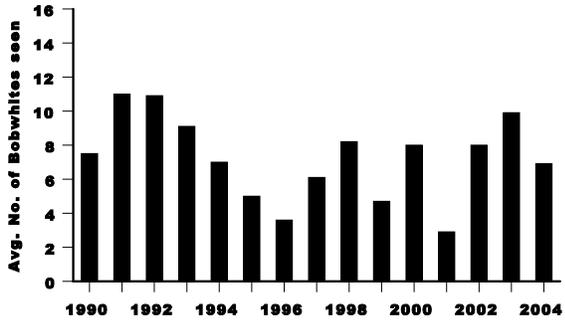
This is the 15 year of this survey and the statewide quail index is down 5% from the previous 14 year average (Table 1). Only the southeast region reported increases in quail over last year. The statewide index is down 30% over the 2003 august survey. The largest decreases were observed in the north central, northeast, southwest and south central regional indices. Quail sighted in the southwestern, southeast and northwestern (Figure 1) exceeded their previous 14 year averages. Conversely, the south central, north central and northeastern regional indices remain well below their 14 year averages.

Table 1. Quail seen/20 mile route during the August roadside surveys.

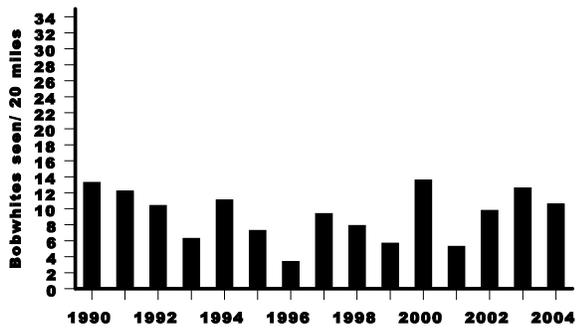
Region	Previous 14 yr. average	2003	2004
Statewide	7.3	9.9	6.9
Northwest	9.2	12.6	10.6
Northcentral	4.2	4.5	1.2
Northeast	5.4	2.9	1.4
Southwest	16.0	32.2	19.5
Southcentral	3.5	4.4	1.9
Southeast	6.6	4.4	8.2

Despite drought conditions this spring, the summer has been characterized by cool and wet weather. Such weather patters are often associated with good quail production which has been the common assertion of landowners and field biologists. Cover conditions are being reported as good across Oklahoma which might explain the modest survey results. Good cover can temper survey results as visibility along routes can be limited and quail are less likely to concentrate in bar-ditches if cover elsewhere is plentiful. Forty-four broods were observed during the survey most of which were either full or $\frac{3}{4}$ grown. Results of the August survey generally don't include quail produced from the second hatch which typically peaks in late August. Since a successful second hatch often determines the difference between an average and good quail season the October counts should provide important information and some clarity about this falls quail population and season outlook

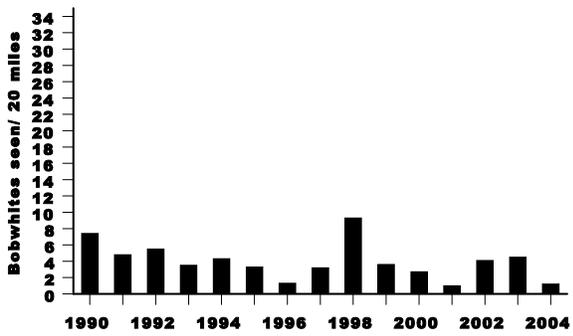
Statewide



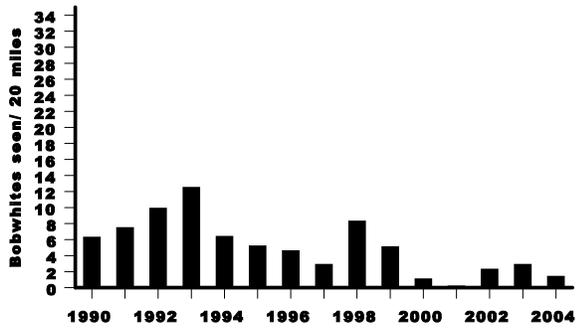
Northwest



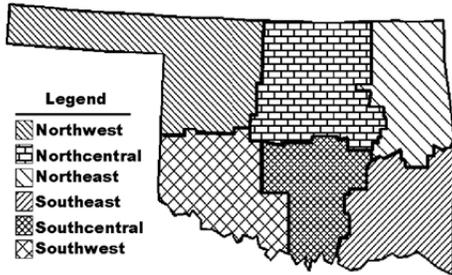
Northcentral



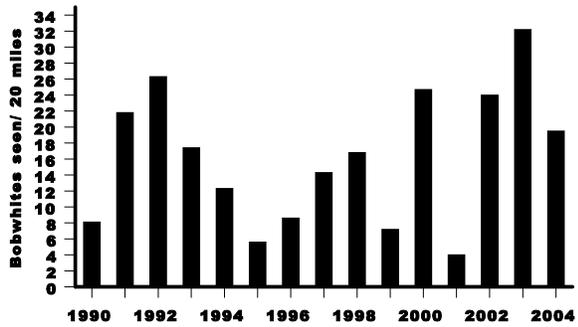
Northeast



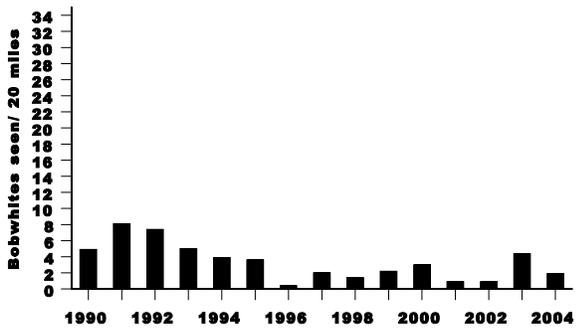
Regional boundaries for Oklahoma used for quail roadside surveys.



Southwest



Southcentral



Southeast

