

# 2004 Quail Season Outlook

By

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This summer's cool and wet weather has Oklahoma quail hunters abuzz with high expectations. Reports from the field definitely haven't dampened those expectations. Many landowners and sportsman from across the state have reported "seeing more quail this year than in several past". While the consensus in the field is that this year's bird crop will be good, survey results are down this year.

This is the 15<sup>th</sup> year of roadside surveys and the statewide quail index is down 8% from the previous 14-year average (Table 1). The decrease is reflected in all regions with exception of the Northwest and Southeast that reported increases over the average of 26% and 49%, respectively.

The 2004 statewide index decreased 20% over the 2003 index. Quail sightings in only the Northwestern and Southeastern regions of Oklahoma exceeded 2003 numbers (Figure 1).

**Table 1. Average quail seen/20 mile route during the August & October roadside surveys.**

Region	Previous 14 yr. average	2003	2004
Statewide	7.2	8.3	6.6
Northwest	10.5	12.5	13.2
North-central	3.9	3.0	1.6
Northeast	4.8	1.9	0.7
Southwest	15.3	24.5	13.0
South-central	3.1	2.8	2.3
Southeast	6.7	6.0	10.0

Despite some low survey results, reports from landowners and regional biologist suggest quail populations are improved across the state this year.

Cool and wet summers, which are favorable for quail production, can also distort survey results. Cover for quail is plentiful as a result of this summer's weather. When cover is plentiful quail are not forced to the bar-ditches, reducing encounters during the surveys.

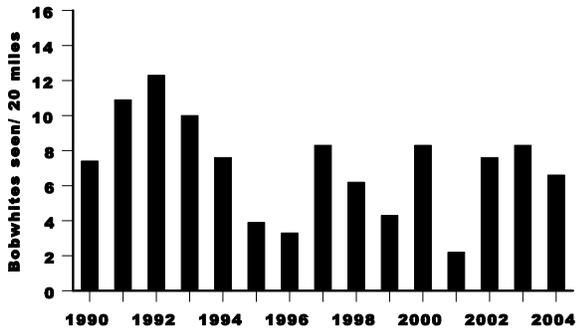
The survey does indicate this summer's weather was favorable to quail production. Extended nesting was evident as 35% of the coveys encountered during October consisted of bird not fully grown. Likewise, landowners and biologists reported a good early hatch and continue to see young broods. Several have reported seeing chicks unable to fly in late September and early October. Due to late production early season hunters may encounter some small bird covey this season.

With the vast expanses of native habitat the Northwestern and Southwestern portions of the state continue to lead in quail numbers. Populations in Southeast seem to be responding favorably to timber harvest practices. Both biologist and sportsmen have reported seeing a number of quail in clearcuts and young plantations on Honobia and Three Rivers WMAs.

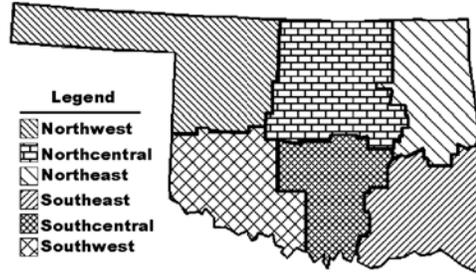
We still need to keep our eye to the sky and fingers crossed. Weather not only dictates production it has an enormous effect on hunting success. Bird are there in good numbers this year but we still need good scenting conditions in order to make this a memorable season.



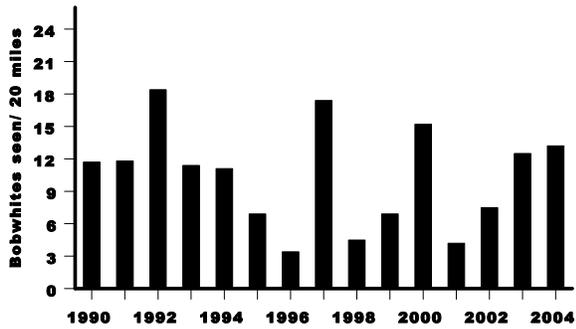
### Statewide



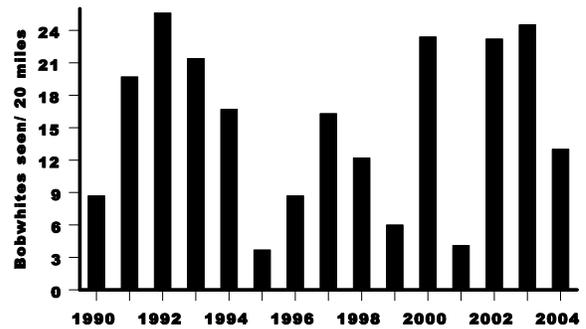
Regional boundaries for Oklahoma used for quail roadside surveys.



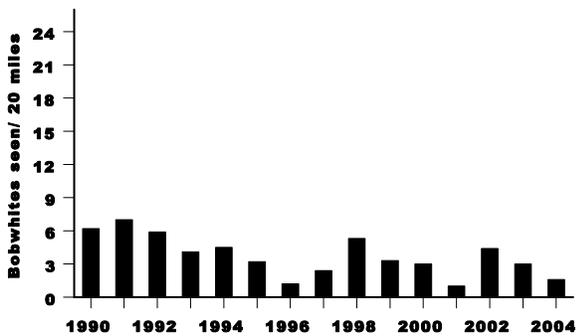
### Northwest



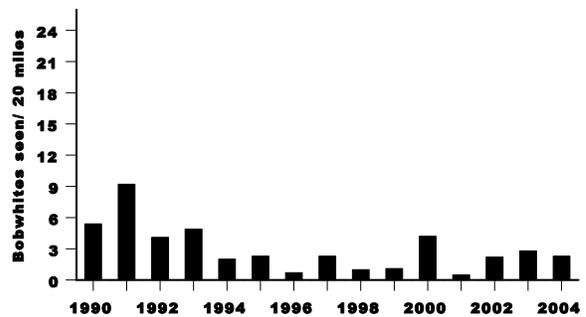
### Southwest



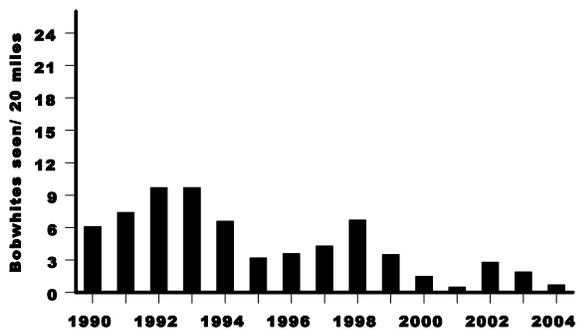
### Northcentral



### Southcentral



### Northeast



### Southeast

