



August 2026 Quail Roadside Survey

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September - 2026

Roadside Surveys Show Bobwhite Persevering Summer Heat

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has conducted annual roadside surveys in August and October since 1990 to provide an index of annual population trends. The number of quail observed are reported to provide an index of quail abundance and reproductive success. Currently, ODWC employees survey 81 routes in 75 of Oklahoma's 77 counties. Oklahoma and Tulsa counties, both comprised of almost exclusively urban landscapes, are excluded from the survey. Pushmataha Co., in the southeast region and the Ouachita Mountains ecoregion, was unable to be surveyed this August due to staff turnover.

The state is divided into either geographic regions (Figure 1) or ecoregions (Figure 11) to compare the index year-to-year. By looking at both divisions, we can get a more precise view of on-the-ground conditions in each county and can get a better glimpse into the area you may intend to hunt.

The 2026 August roadside quail survey shows statewide quail numbers continue to hold strong, well above the 10-year average and above the long-term 37-year average! Specifically, the statewide quail index is at 5.45 quail per route (q/r), 7.5% above the 37-year average of 5.07q/r (Table 1 & Figure 2), and 72.5% above the 10-year average of 3.16q/r. Age structure of observed quail showed 59.2% full grown, 30.7% $\frac{3}{4}$ grown, 7.1% $\frac{1}{2}$ grown, and 3% $\frac{1}{4}$ grown birds. This age structure reveals a slightly higher number of $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, and full-grown birds compared to last year's survey indicating successful early broods with additional recent nesting success. Drought intensification could have led to fewer observations in the $\frac{3}{4}$ grown age class. As temperatures break from a dry and hot summer it can allow for additional nesting success into October. ODWC biologists are currently monitoring fall weather patterns and are excited to see the numbers on the October Survey. Additionally, ODWC biologists have received several reports of broods of varying ages throughout the summer. All regions of the state except the southeast region have remained above their respective 10-year averages. All regions of the state except the southeast, northeast, and southcentral regions have remained above their respective long-term 37-year averages (Figures 3-8). Oklahoma's climate over the past year has been driven by a mild La Niña pattern, which has led to a drier and warmer summer with some areas in the southwest seeing over 60 days of 100°F high temperatures. As August slipped away into a

moment in time NOAA has now issued an El Niño Advisory; with currently a 90% chance of a very strong El Niño in the Northern Hemisphere. Here in OK, that generally translates into a milder fall/winter with increased precipitation. These models currently forecast this El Niño pattern to peak in November before returning to more ENSO-Neutral conditions early next spring. We are currently seeing drought conditions across 100% of the state with 81.9% in the D2 (Severe Drought) category or worse. Spring rains helped to produce a decent stand of native grasses and forbs, but rainfall throughout the growing season has been more limited across much of the state. Below, figures 9 & 10 show the drought and rainfall conditions across the state.

Over the last 180 days most of Oklahoma has seen drought intensify, with much of the state receiving less than 75% of normal precipitation, the hardest impacted areas are over 10" below normal rainfall for this period. The last 180-day period is recorded as the 2nd driest in Oklahoma's history for the western central region. While the numbers in this this August may have varied compared to last year's report, keep in mind that good habitat means better escape cover along roadsides which can contribute to fewer observations along survey routes. We can also look at roadside survey numbers on an ecoregion basis; Figure 11 shows the 9 major ecoregions of Oklahoma while Table 2 gives a comparison of the 2025 and 2026 survey results by ecoregion.

No scaled quail were observed during the 2026 August survey. There are only a few routes in Oklahoma with the opportunity to observe scaled quail. Therefore, this is not a prediction of scaled quail abundance, strictly an observation. ODWC has received several reports of scaled quail broods in the Oklahoma panhandle this summer.

ODWC biologists have received numerous brood reports throughout August. Over the past 37 years the August Roadside Surveys have shown us that they are not always the most reliable when it comes to forecasting the upcoming season. Stay tuned for the October roadside surveys and 2026 Season Outlook, which will provide a better indication of what the upcoming quail season could have in store.

Oklahoma's quail season is right around the corner opening on November 14th and closing on February 15th, 2027. The bag-limit remains 10 quail daily. Non-residents hunting wildlife management areas (WMAs) for quail will need to attain a Game Bird Permit as well as check-in and out of the WMA they access via the Go Outdoors Oklahoma App or at GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. For additional regulations and more information consult the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Guide online at: wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/regs or in print wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

Figure 1. Oklahoma Roadside Survey Regions

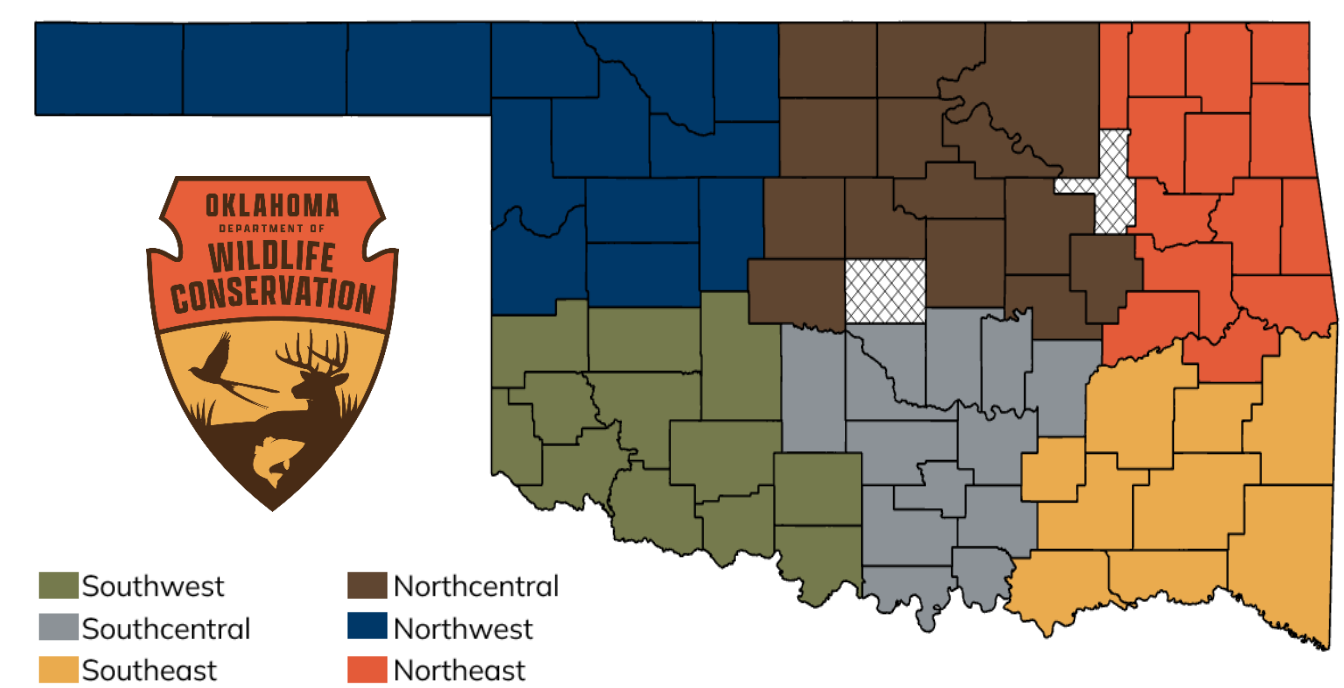


Table 1. Bobwhite quail observations/20-mile route by geographic region in Oklahoma.

Region	37-year Average	10-year Average	2024 Average	2025 Average	2026 Average	
Statewide	5.07	3.16	6.52	4.98	5.45	↑
Northwest	7.31	5.32	13.31	7.38	8.00	↑
Northeast	2.75	1.49	4.71	0.29	2.14	↑
Northcentral	3.29	3.07	4.13	4.93	5.93	↑
Southwest	12.00	6.20	13.42	12.38	13.67	↑
Southeast	3.51	1.65	0.18	4.63	1.30	↓
Southcentral	1.75	0.32	1.85	0.00	0.92	↑

Figure 2. Long-term average of bobwhite observations statewide in Oklahoma

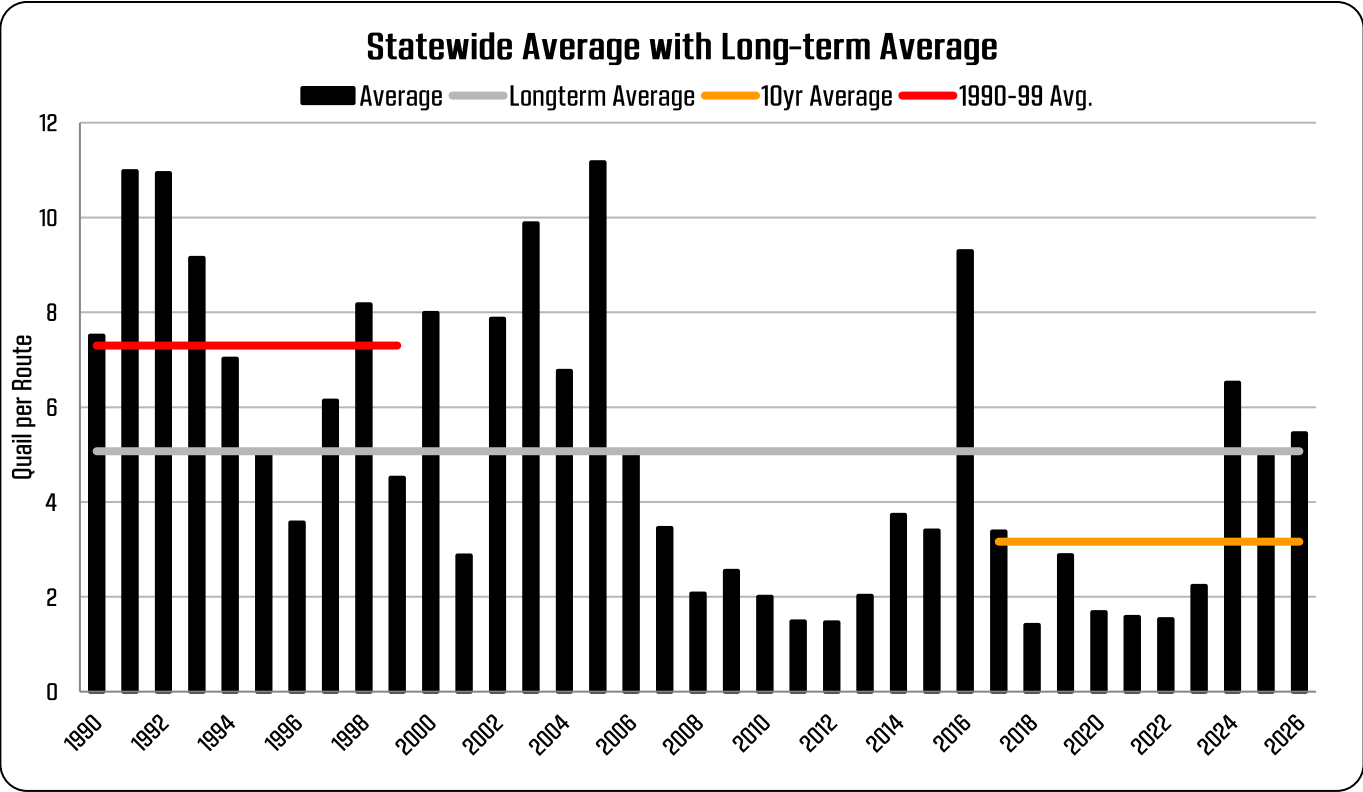


Figure 3. Long-term average of bobwhite observations in northwest Oklahoma.

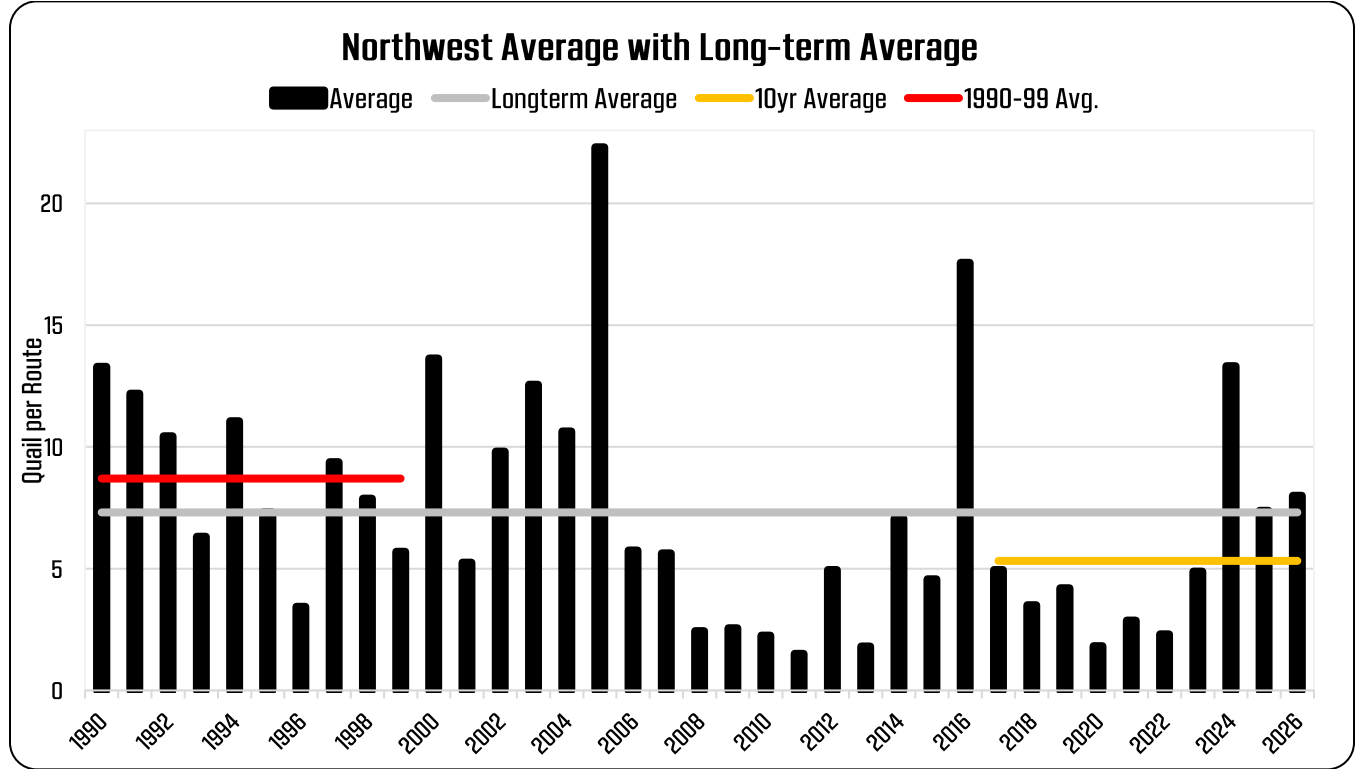


Figure 4. Long-term average of bobwhite observations in northeast Oklahoma.

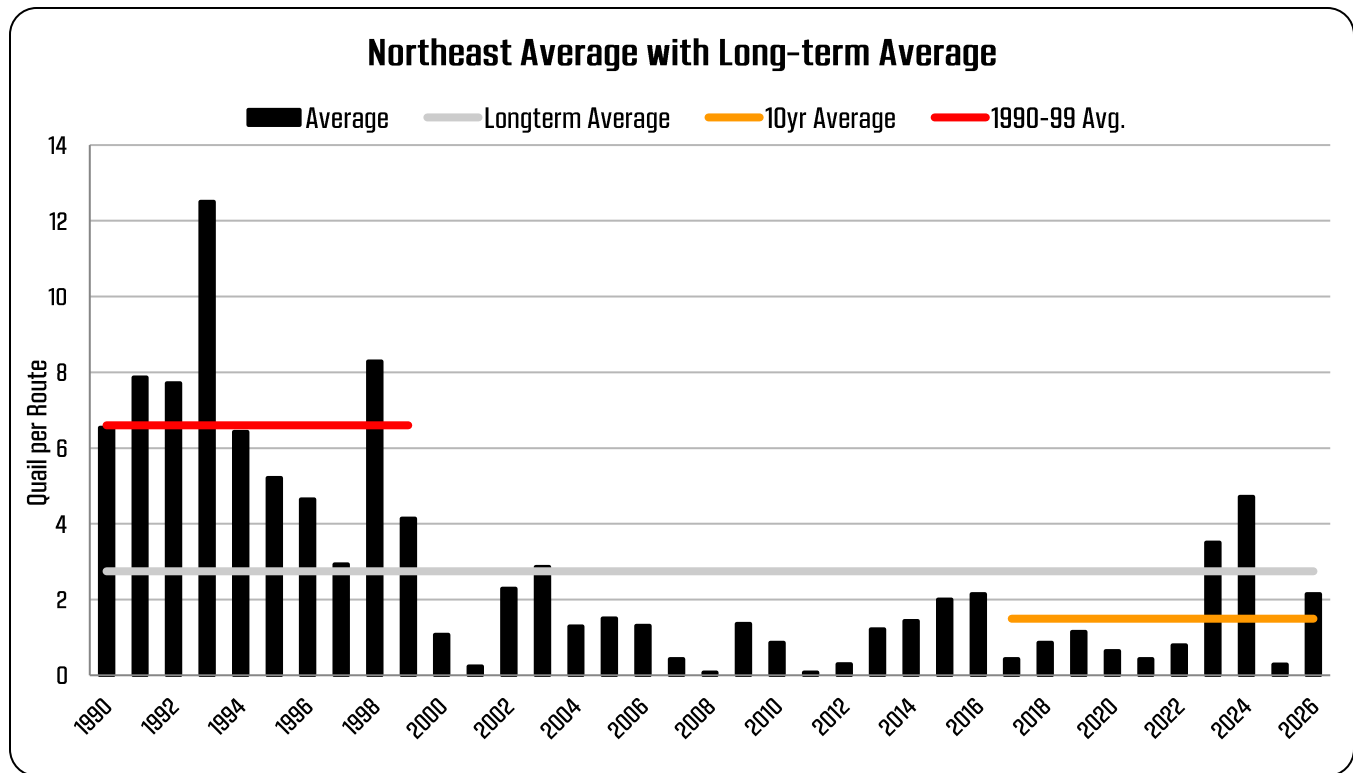


Figure 5. Long-term average of bobwhite observations in northcentral Oklahoma.

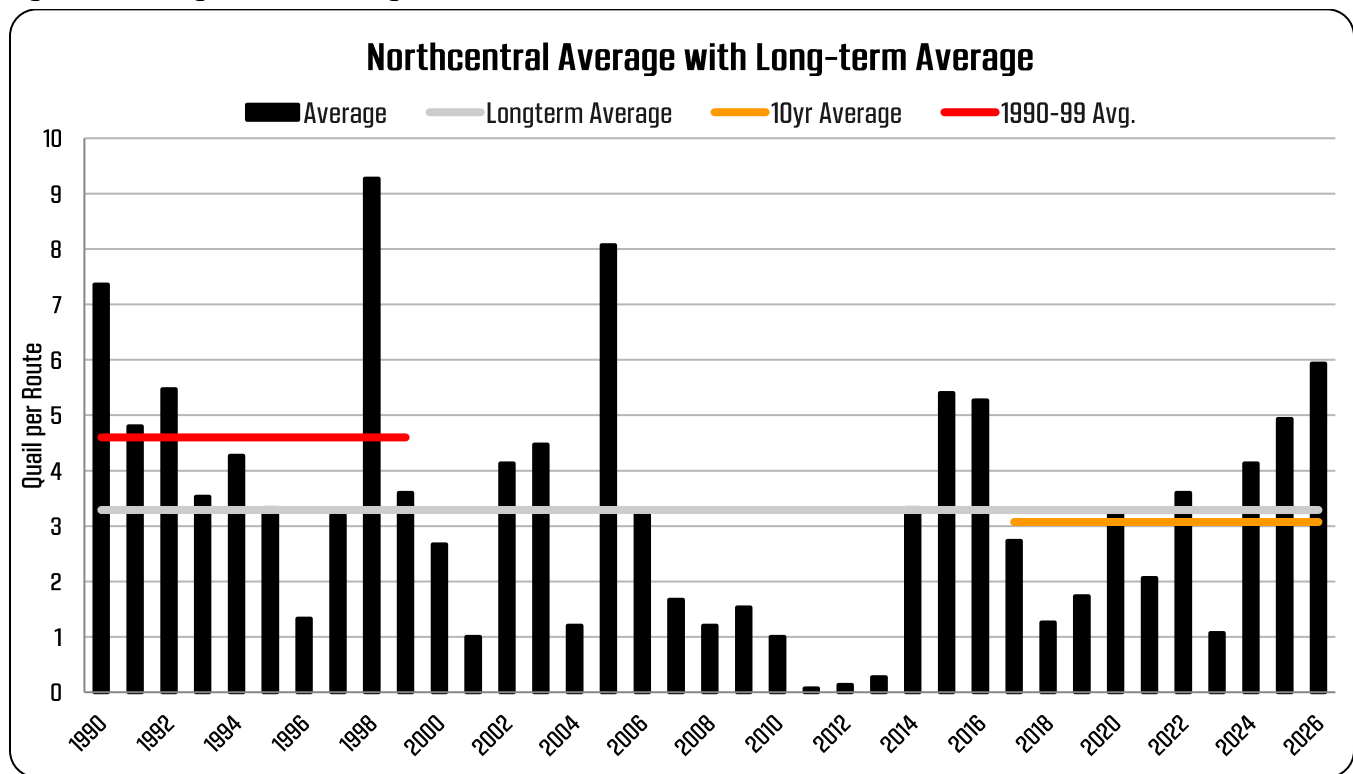


Figure 6. Long-term average of bobwhite observations in southwest Oklahoma.

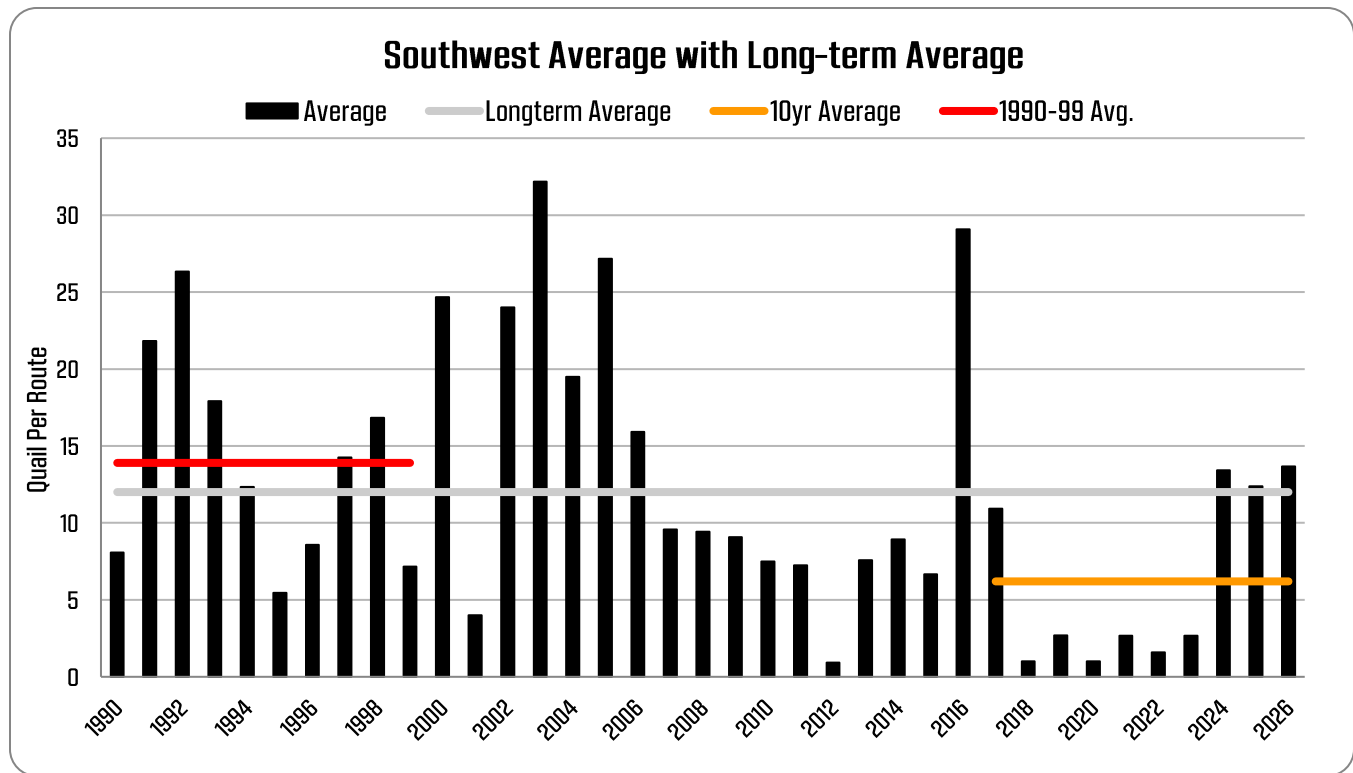


Figure 7. Long-term average of bobwhite observations in southeast Oklahoma.

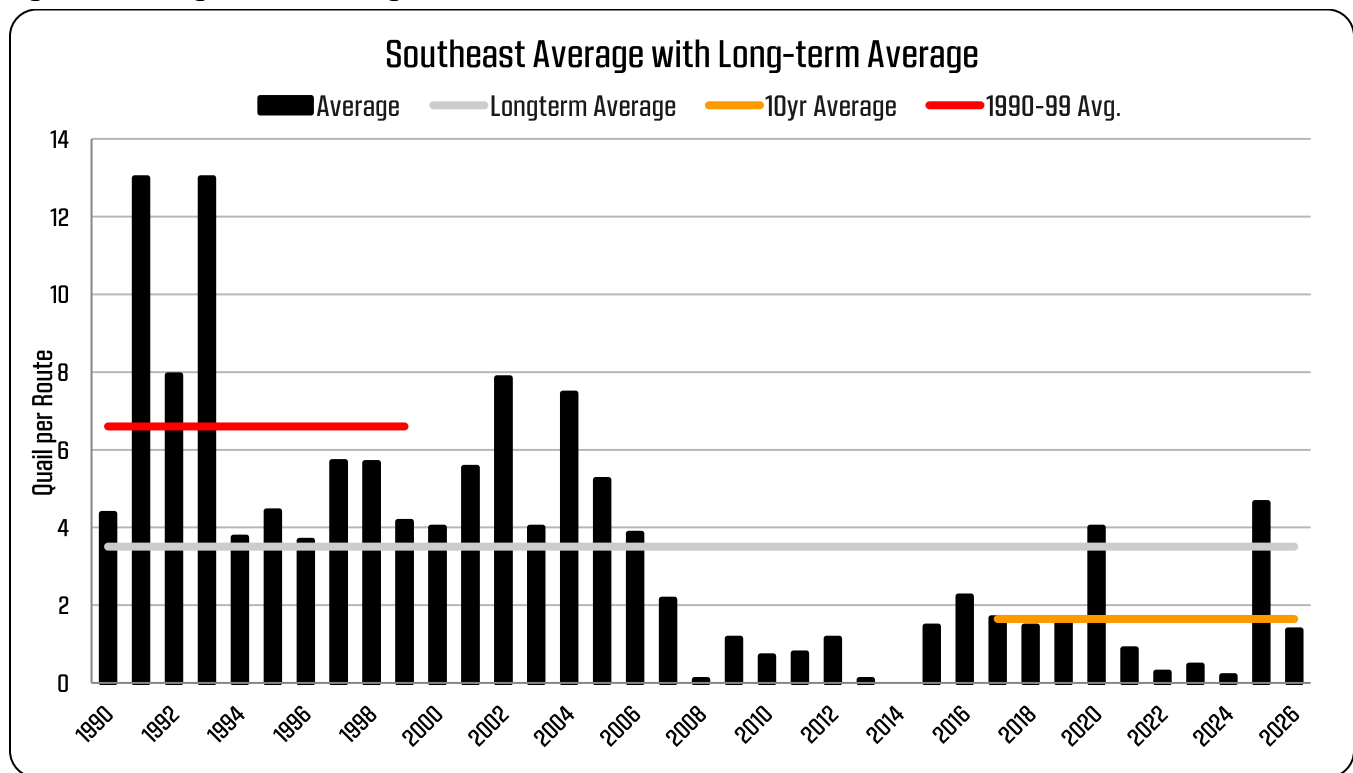


Figure 8. Long-term average of bobwhite observations in southcentral Oklahoma.

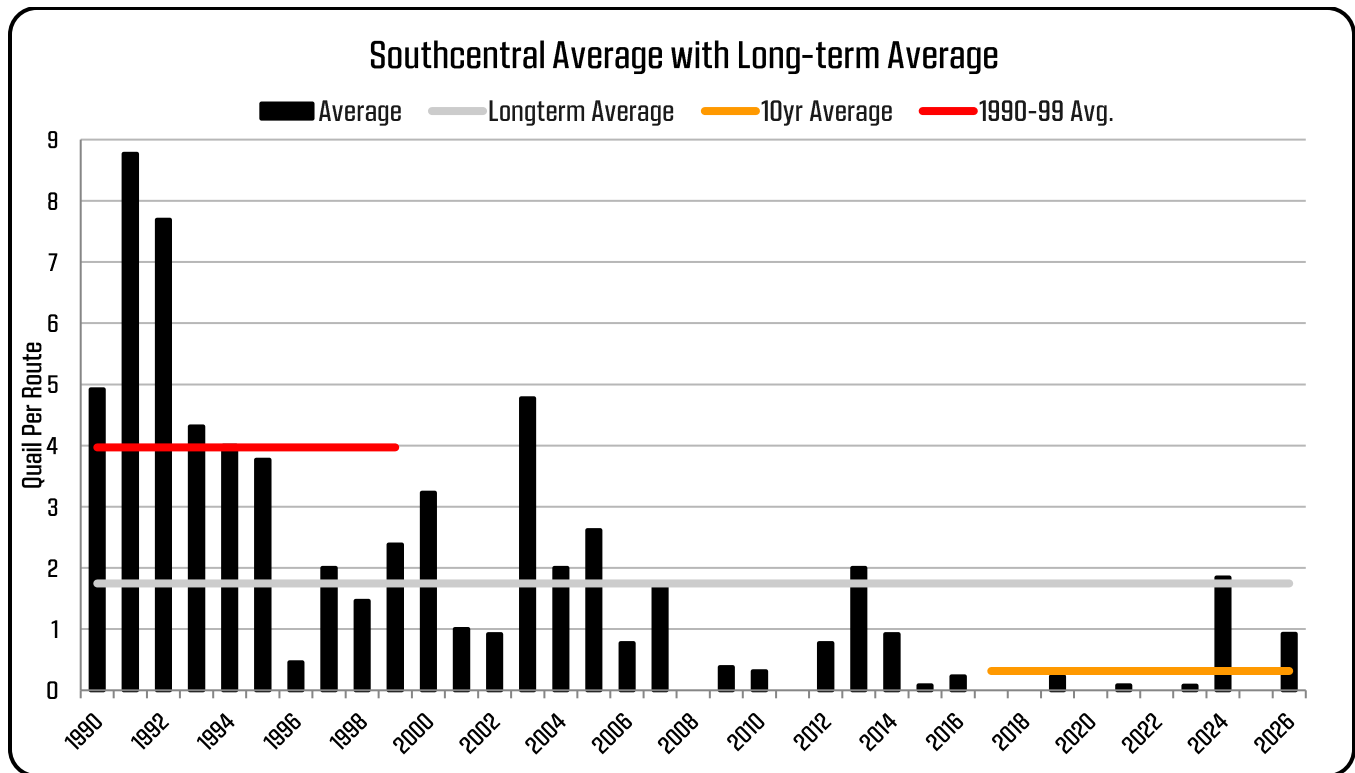


Figure 9. Drought Comparison from March 3rd, July 28th, and Sept. 1, 2026 (Source: droughtmonitor.unl.edu/)

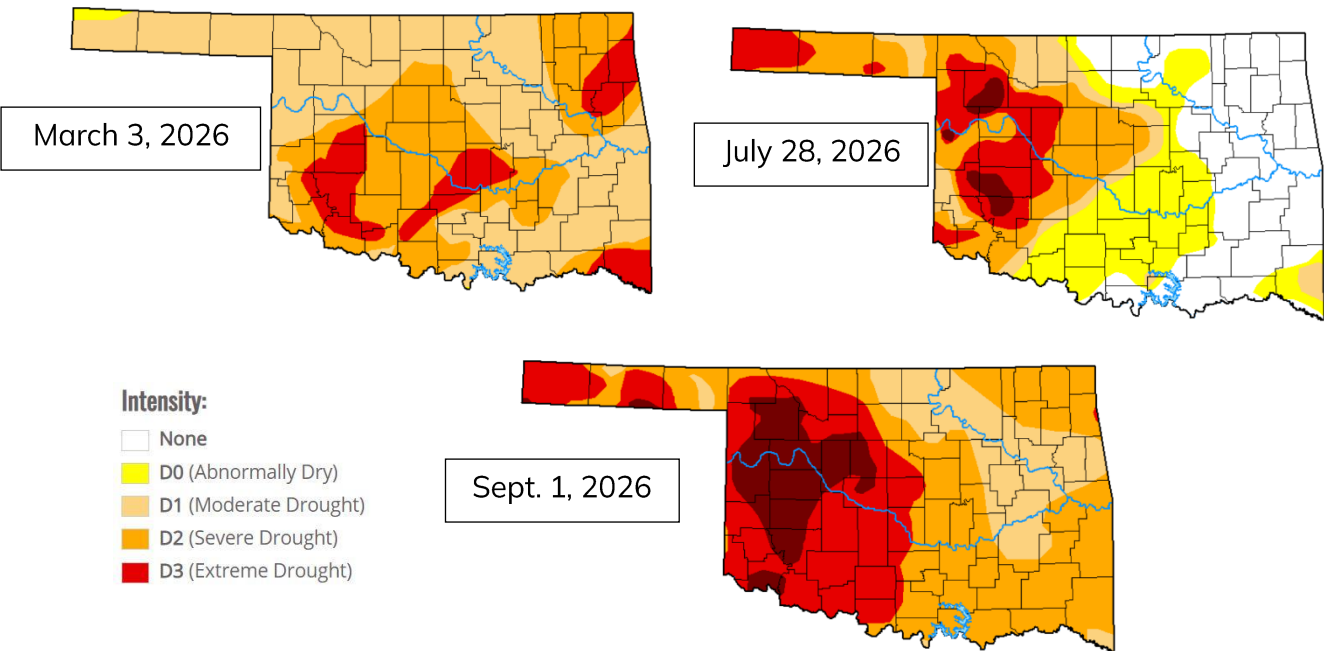


Figure 10. Departure from normal rainfall in inches: March 12 – Sept. 7, 2026 (Source: mesonet.org)

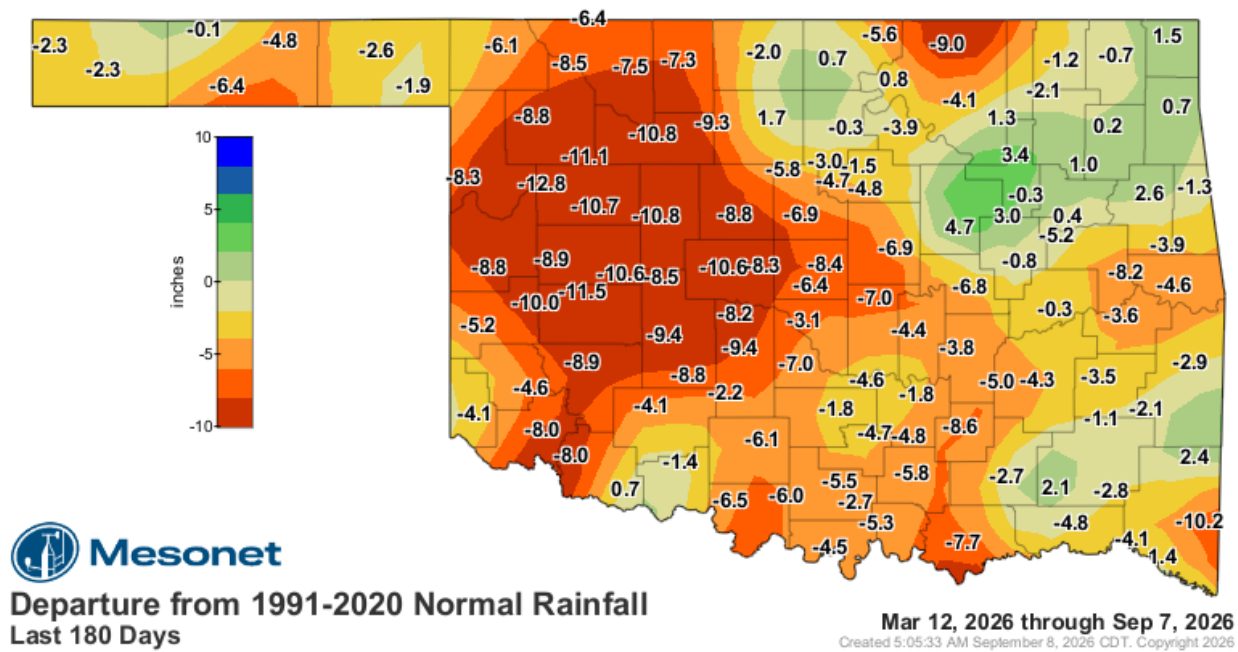


Figure 11. Ecoregions of Oklahoma

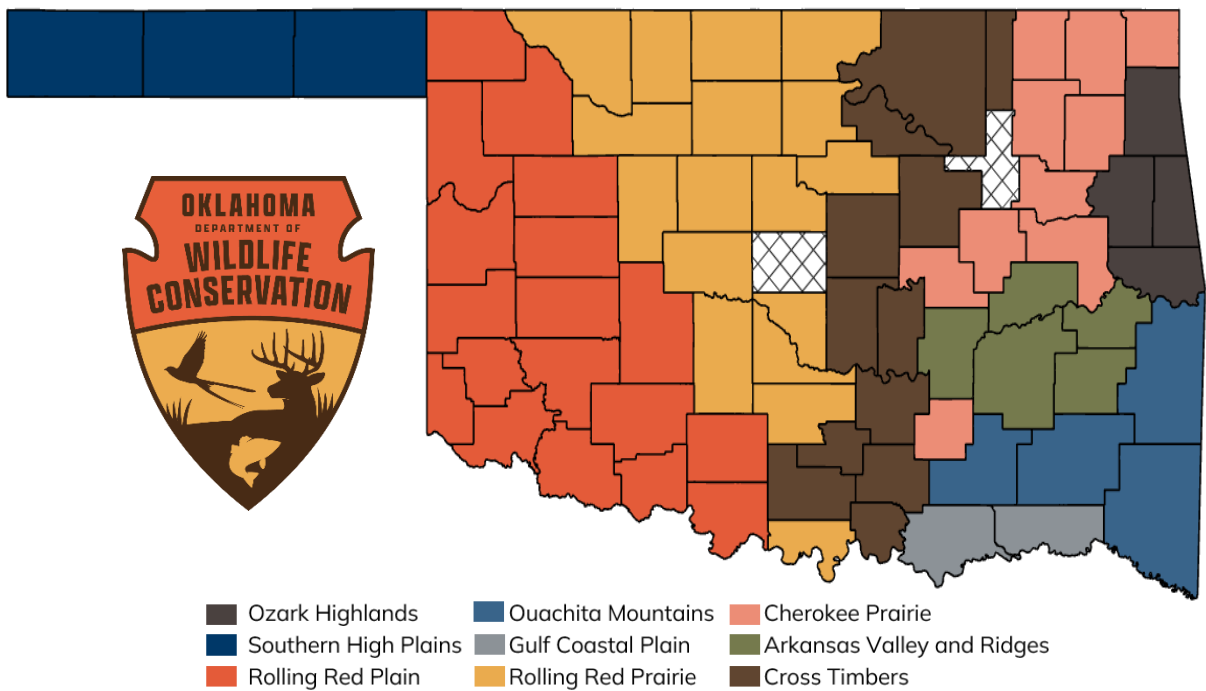


Table 2. Bobwhite quail numbers/20-mile route in the 9 geographic ecoregions of Oklahoma

Ecoregion	August		
	2025	2026	
Arkansas Valley & Ridges	0.83	2.00	↑
Cherokee Prairie	0.20	2.00	↑
Cross Timbers	1.08	2.00	↑
Ozark Highlands	0.50	2.75	↑
Gulf Coastal Plain	5.00	0.50	↓
Ouachita Mountains	7.20	0*	↓
Rolling Red Prairie	4.71	7.76	↑
Rolling Red Plain	10.62	10.50	↓
Southern High Plain	9.00	6.00	↓
Statewide	4.98	5.45	↑