

2019 Quail Season Outlook

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Thirty years ago the ODWC began conducting roadside surveys to monitor quail numbers throughout the state. There are 83 twenty mile routes surveyed in August and October in all counties except Oklahoma and Tulsa counties. August surveys give biologists an idea of breeding success, while October surveys reveal a glimpse of recruitment for the fall hunting season. Typically, August survey numbers are higher than October due to the fact that some chicks will not survive through the summer. Long term and year to year trends are important for sportsmen and biologists alike. The last decade has seen survey numbers cycle starting lower in 2010 and slowly rising to a peak in 2016 that quickly fell back to previous lows. In 2019 we are seeing the numbers come back up slightly. The data is sorted in two ways: by Region (Figure 1) and by Ecoregion (Figure2). Looking at the data by both breakdowns can help to understand the causes of change in quail numbers. 2018 was a challenging year for quail and hunters alike with quail low in numbers, but 2019 is looking to be a better season with an average increase of quail per route (qpr) of 23.6% statewide. When we break the statewide numbers down by region we see some areas producing better than others. Regionally the Southwest had the largest increase from 0.8 to 2.58 qpr; Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast regions also show an increase over 2018. (Table 1) On an ecoregion basis, the Rolling Red Prairie and Ouachita Mountains had the largest increases. The Rolling Red Plains also showed an increase over 2018. (Table 2)

Most of the state had an unusual year weather-wise. The spring brought on near record rainfall for much of Oklahoma (Figure 10), with rainfall amounts almost doubling the average annual rainfall (Figure 11) in some places. This precipitation led to a delayed start to the nesting season for Oklahoma's upland game birds, but brought on an excellent forb and insect crop. Over the summer, the southwestern part of the state was hit by drought, which had a negative impact on brood survival (Figure 12). In August all regions of the state were up over 2018's survey numbers. However, in October only 3 of the 6 regions are up going into the season.. Figures 3-9 below show the average survey results for 1990-2019.

This year ODWC is once again collecting wings from public lands to better evaluate our quail population. If you harvest a bird from a Wildlife Management Area with a wing box, please take the time to place one wing (whichever is least damaged as long as only one wing/quail) off of the harvested quail, fill out the envelope, and then place it in the box. The management areas that will have boxes are Beaver River, Canton, Cooper, Cross Timbers, Kaw, Packsaddle, Pushmataha, and Sandy Sanders. There will also be a short survey to complete. Thank you very much for your participation.

For this upcoming season, hunters will likely find pockets of fair to good populations of quail where reproduction was not as severely impacted by spring rains or summer drought. Hunting will likely not be what it was in 2016, but we expect hunters to find birds throughout the state. Ultimately, get out there and enjoy the Oklahoma Outdoors. Work some ground, trust your dog, and make a memory!

Figure 1. Regional Map of Oklahoma.

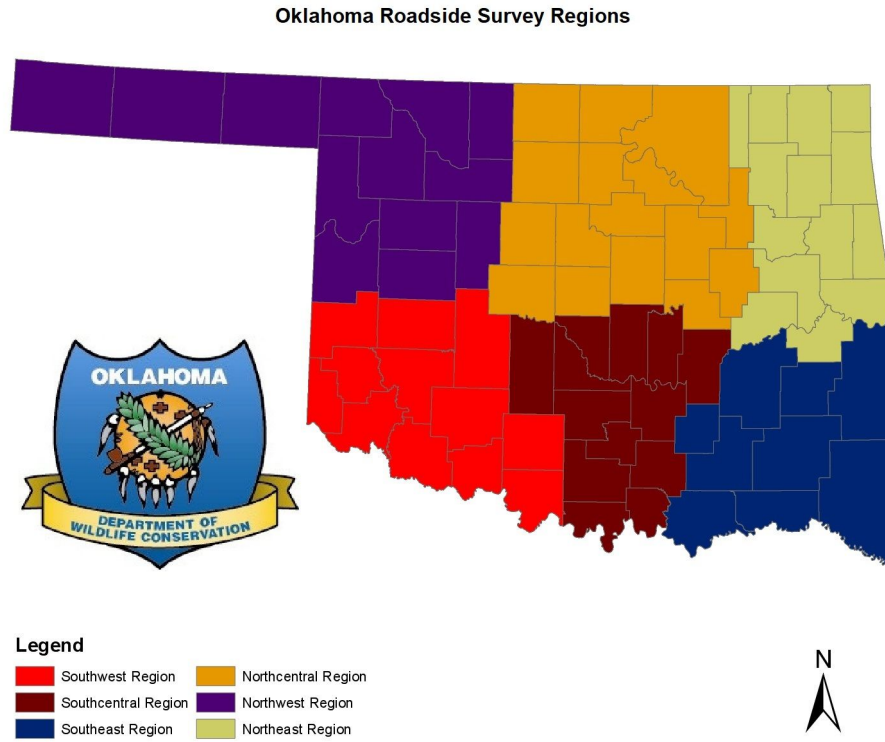


Figure 2. Ecoregion Map of Oklahoma.

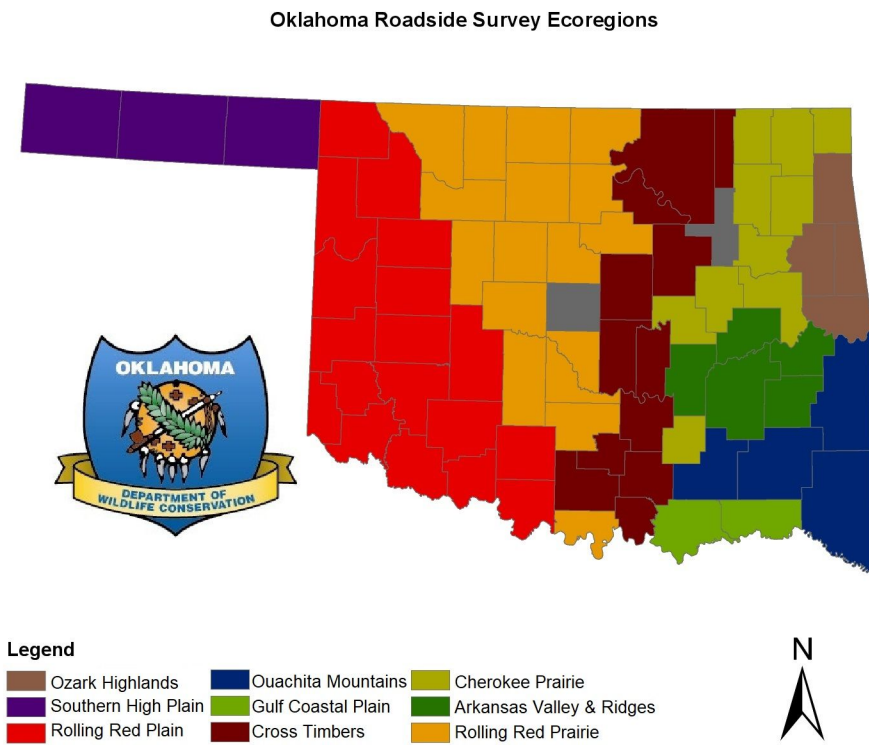


Table 1. Regional Breakdown of Surveys

Region	August			October		
	2018	2019	% Change	2018	2019	% Change
Northwest	3.5	4.2	↑ 20%	4.1	3.06	↓ 25.37%
Northeast	0.86	1.15	↑ 33.72	0.61	0.64	↑ 4.92%
Southwest	1	2.69	↑ 169%	0.8	2.58	↑ 222%
Southeast	1.46	1.55	↑ 6.16%	0.9	0.92	↑ 2.22%
Northcentral	1.26	1.73	↑ 37.3%	0.83	0.6	↓ 27.71%
Southcentral	0	0.23	↑ 100%	0.33	0	↓ 100%
Statewide	1.41	2.88	↑104.3%	1.31	1.62	↑ 23.66%

Table 2: Ecoregional Breakdown of Surveys

Ecoregion		August			October		
		2018	2019	% Change	2018	2019	% Change
Arkansas Valley & Ridges	AVR	0	0.4	↑ 100%	0	0.00	-
Cherokee Prairie	CP	1.1	1.1	-	0.6	0.00	↓ 100%
Cross Timbers	CT	0.08	2	↑ 2400%	0.69	0.69	-
Ozark Highlands	OH	0	0.66	↑ 66%	0	0.00	-
Gulf Coastal Plain	GCP	5.5	0	↓ 100%	0	0.00	-
Ouachita Mountains	OM	1.33	3	↑ 125.6%	0	1.83	↑ 100%
Rolling Red Plain	RRPR	2.47	5.37	↑ 117.41%	1.2	2.15	↑ 79.17%
Rolling Red Prairie	RRPL	1.18	0.35	↓ 70.34%	1	2.18	↑ 118%
Southern High Plain	SHP	4.75	3.25	↓ 31.58%	11.6	6.50	↓ 68.07%
Statewide		1.44	2.7	↑ 87.5%	1.31	1.62	↑ 23.66%

Figure 3: Statewide Long Term Averages

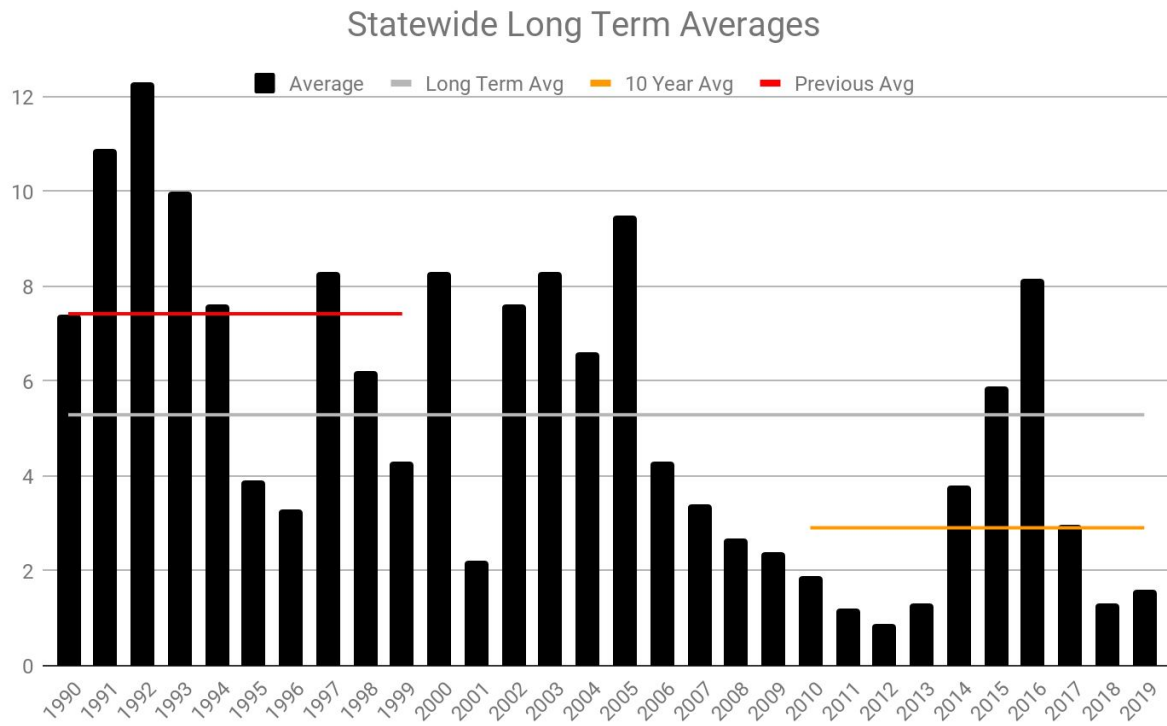


Figure 4: Northwest Long Term Averages

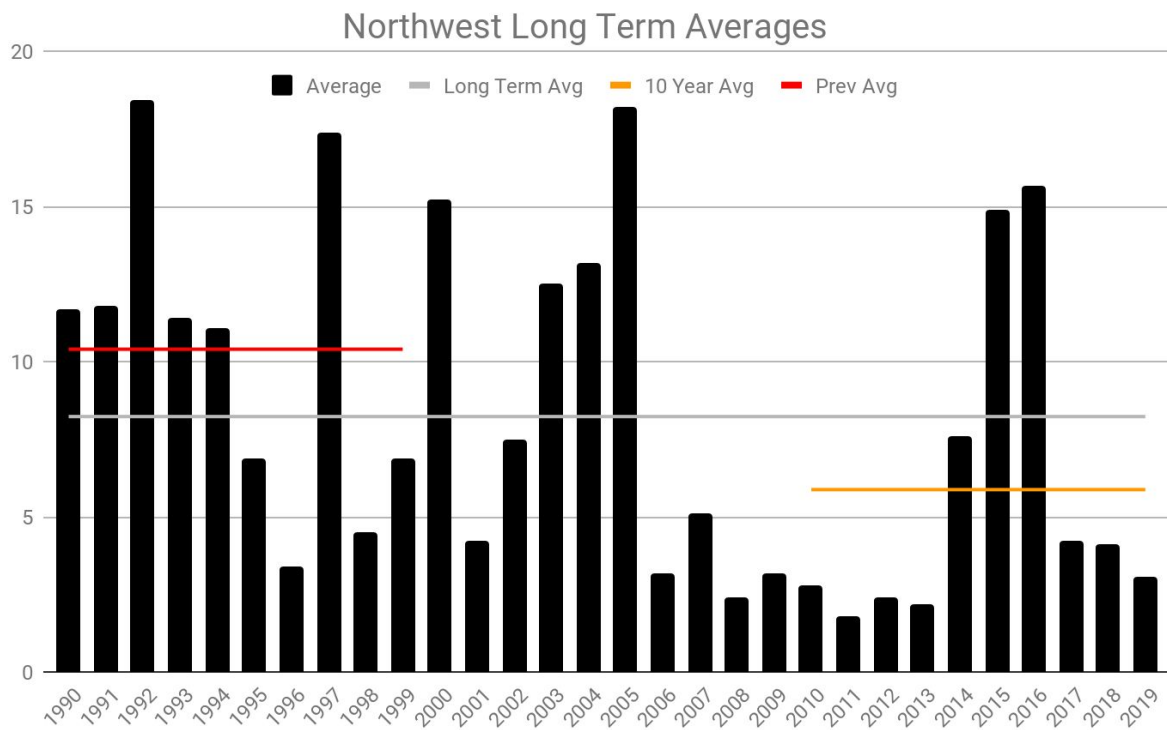


Figure 5: Southwest Long Term Average

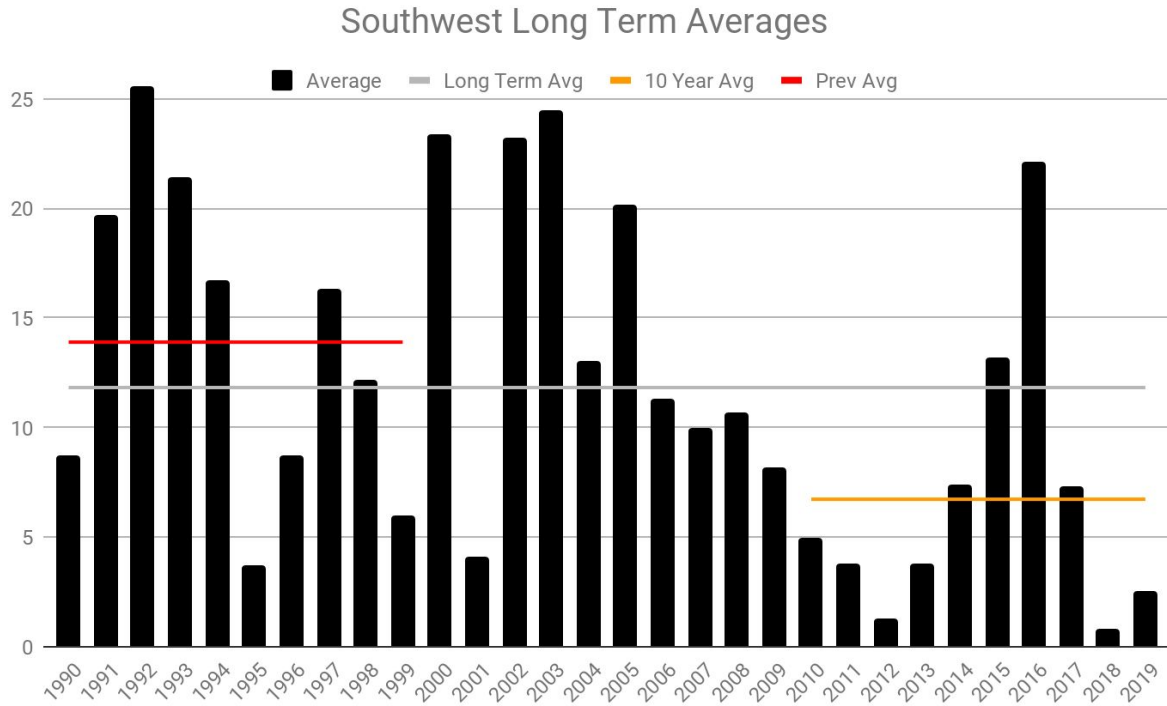


Figure 6: North Central Long Term Average

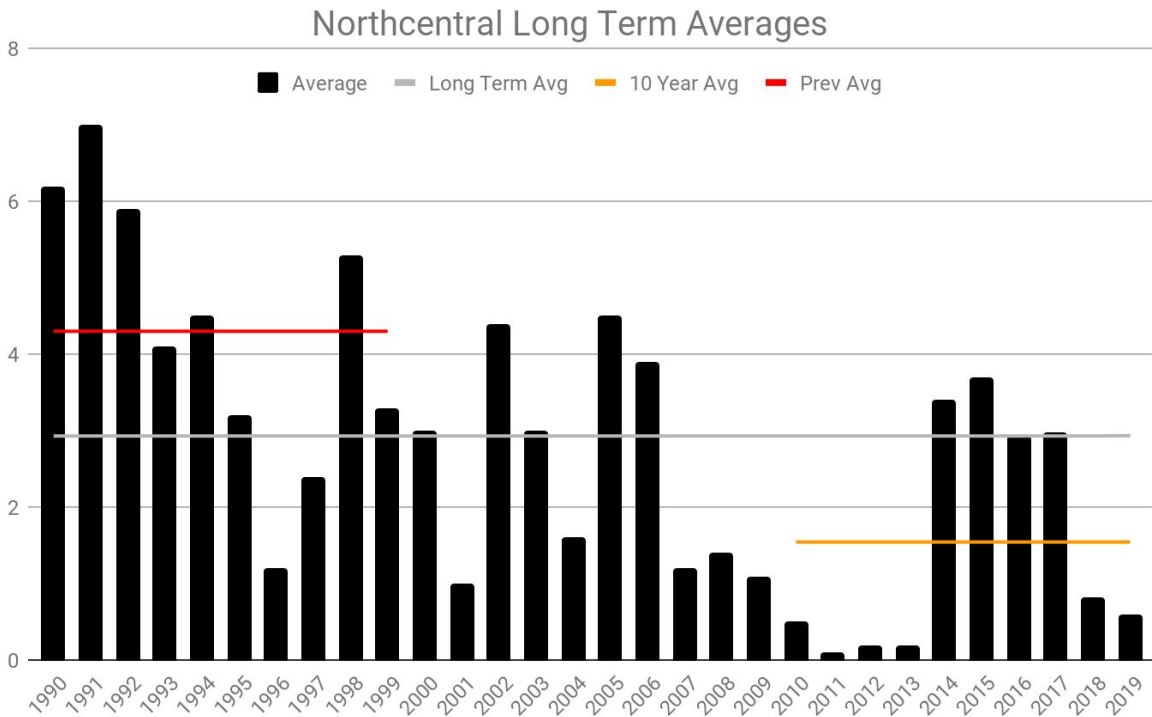


Figure 7: Southcentral Long Term Average

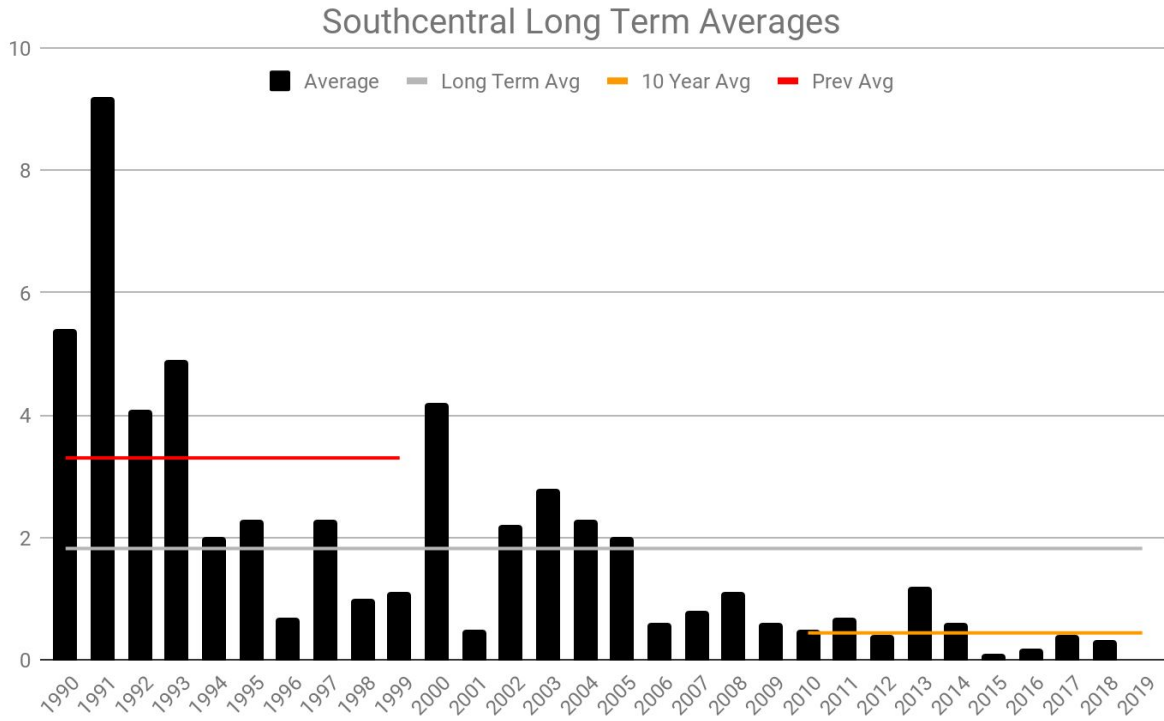


Figure 8: Northeast Long Term Average

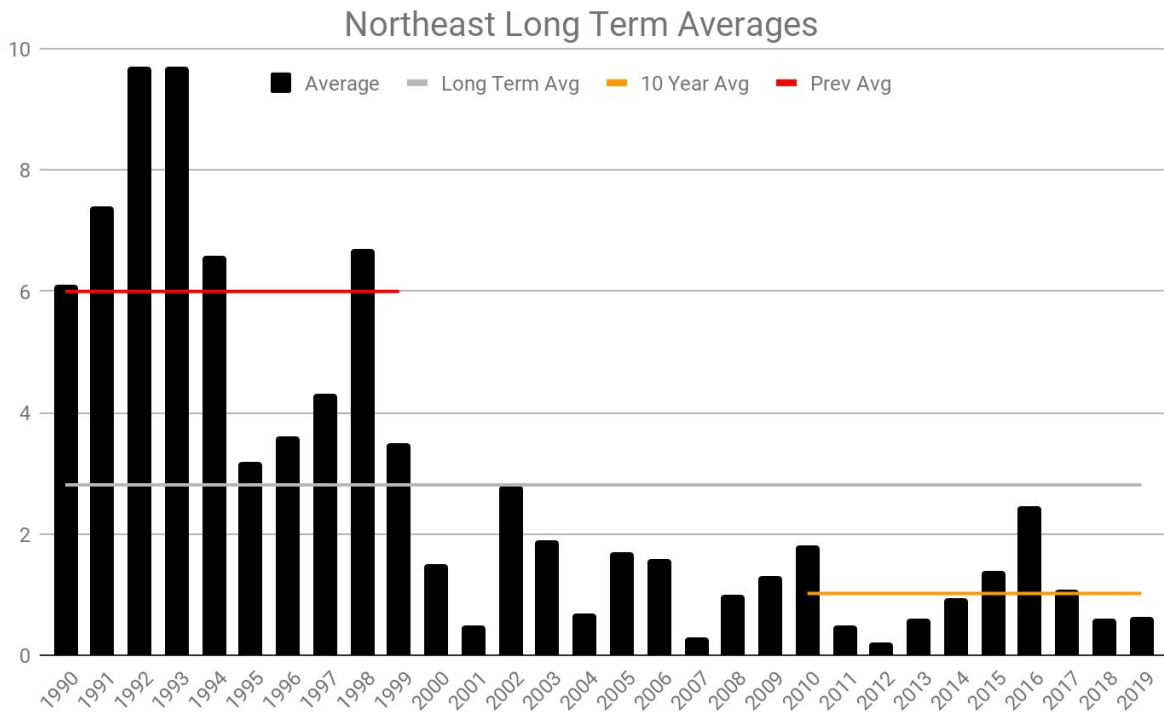


Figure 9: Southeast Long Term Average

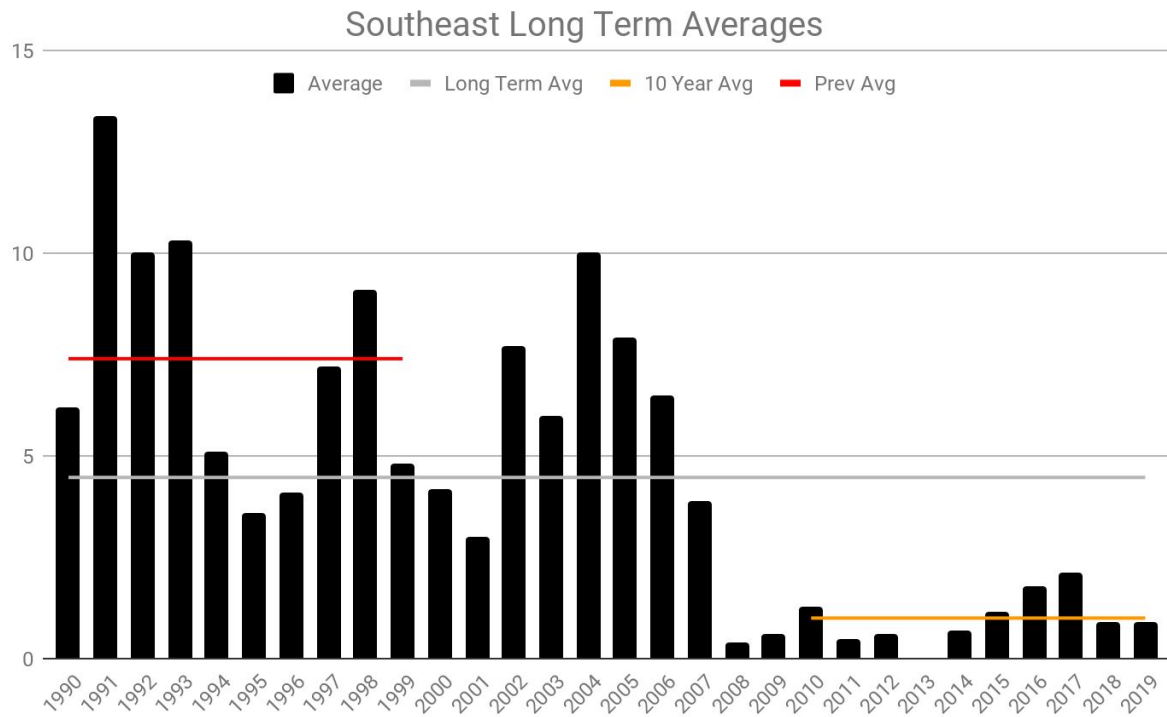


Figure 10: Rainfall for the last 365 Days in Oklahoma (Source: Mesonet.org)

