

August 2019 Quail Roadside Survey

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The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has conducted annual roadside surveys in August and October since 1990 to provide an index of annual population fluctuations. The number of quail observed are reported to provide an index of quail abundance (number of quail seen per 20 mile route) and indicates reproductive success. Currently, ODWC employees survey 83 routes in 75 of Oklahoma's 77 counties. Oklahoma and Tulsa counties are excluded due to the amount of urbanization in those counties. Larger counties have two routes per county.

The 2019 August roadside quail survey shows the statewide quail index up from 2018 increasing from 1.41 to 2.88 which is 47.2% below the 30 year average (Table 1) (Figure 1), and only 7.39% below the 10 year average of 3.11. There are several theories as to what has caused this decline. Currently vegetation across much of the state is very thick due to abundant spring rains and could contribute to fewer observations. Peak production seemed to occur later (July) this year than normal (mid June), due to heavy rainfall amounts in the early nesting season. This delay in hatch time could be playing a part in a low August survey numbers as younger birds may be more difficult to spot in thick vegetation along roadsides. Scaled quail were down in the few counties that they occur in Oklahoma from 11 total scaled quail observed in August 2018 to 2 total scaled quail observed in August 2019. 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.

All regions of Oklahoma improved from the August 2018 roadside survey. The statewide index more than doubled from 1.41 to 2.88. All regions are currently below their historic 30 year average across the state. Rainfall timing has been an issue statewide for much of 2019, with major flooding issues in the northeast and drought conditions in the southwest having negatively impacted many wildlife species. Stay tuned for the October roadside surveys, which will provide a better indication of what the upcoming quail season could have in store.

Table 1. Bobwhite quail numbers/20 mile route in the 6 geographic regions of Oklahoma.

	30 Year Average	10 Year Average	2019 Average	2018 Average
Statewide	5.45	3.11	2.88	1.41
Northwest	7.66	5.23	4.20	3.5
Northeast	2.97	1.04	1.15	0.86
Northcentral	3.22	2.12	1.73	1.26
Southwest	13.22	8.25	4.42	1.0
Southeast	3.93	1.11	1.55	1.46
Southcentral	2.06	0.45	0.23	0.0

Figure 1. Long-term average of bobwhites in Oklahoma.

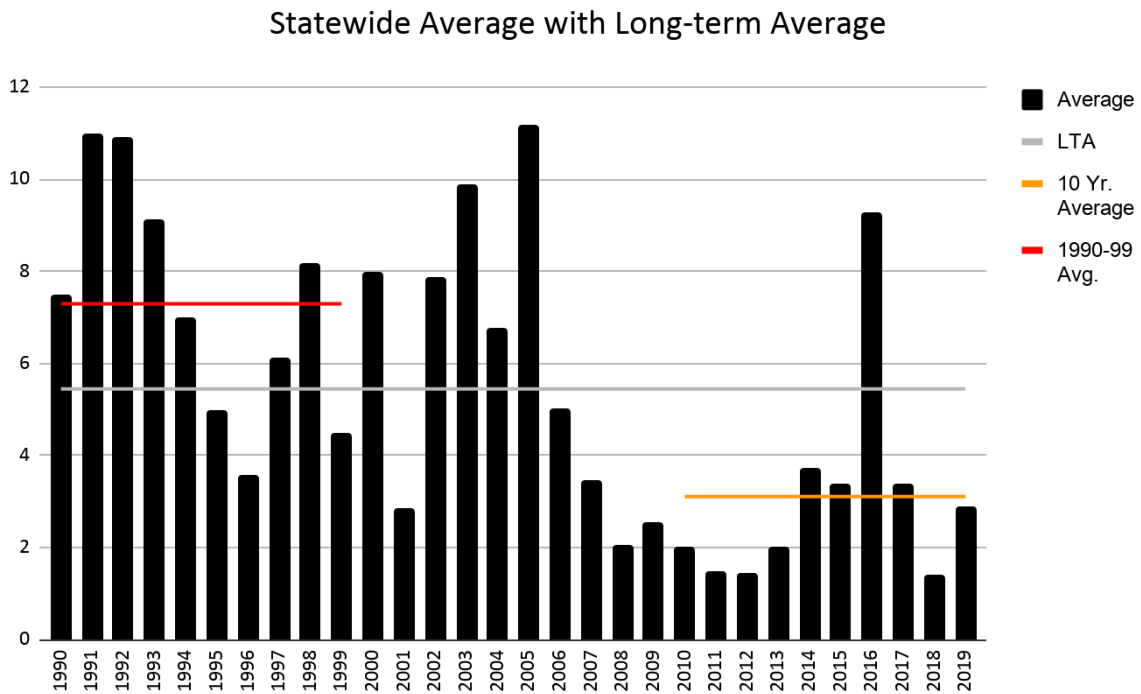


Figure 2. Long-term average of bobwhites in northwest Oklahoma.

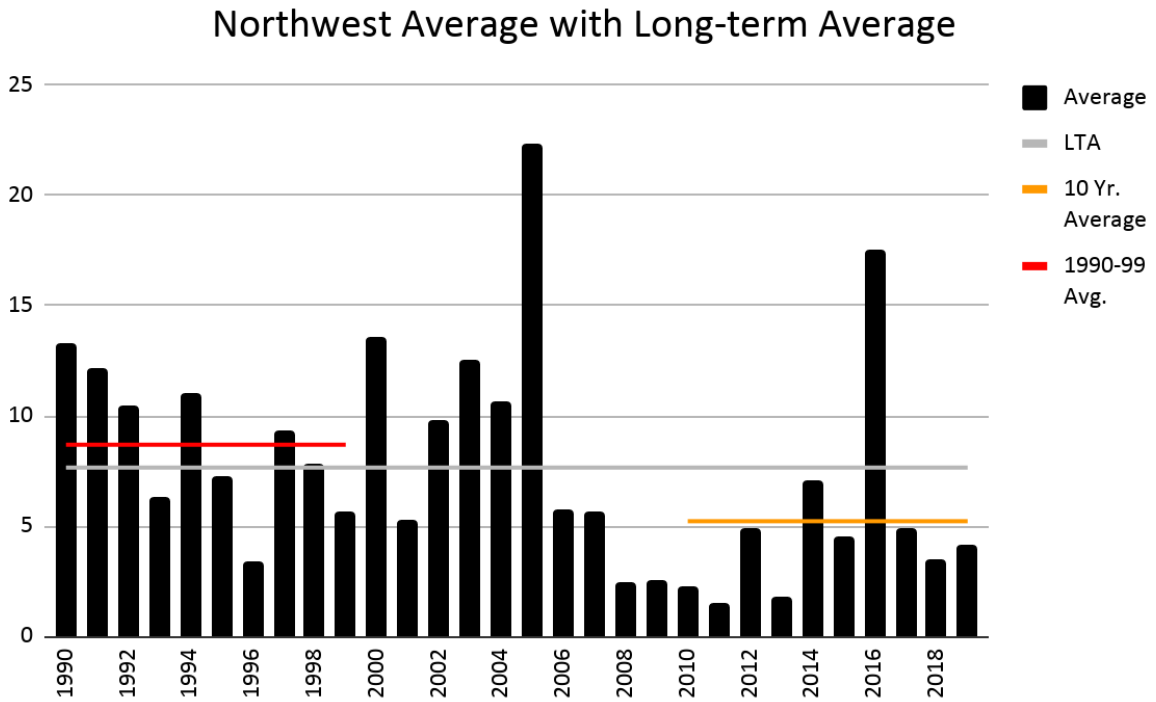


Figure 3. Long-term average of bobwhites in northeast Oklahoma.

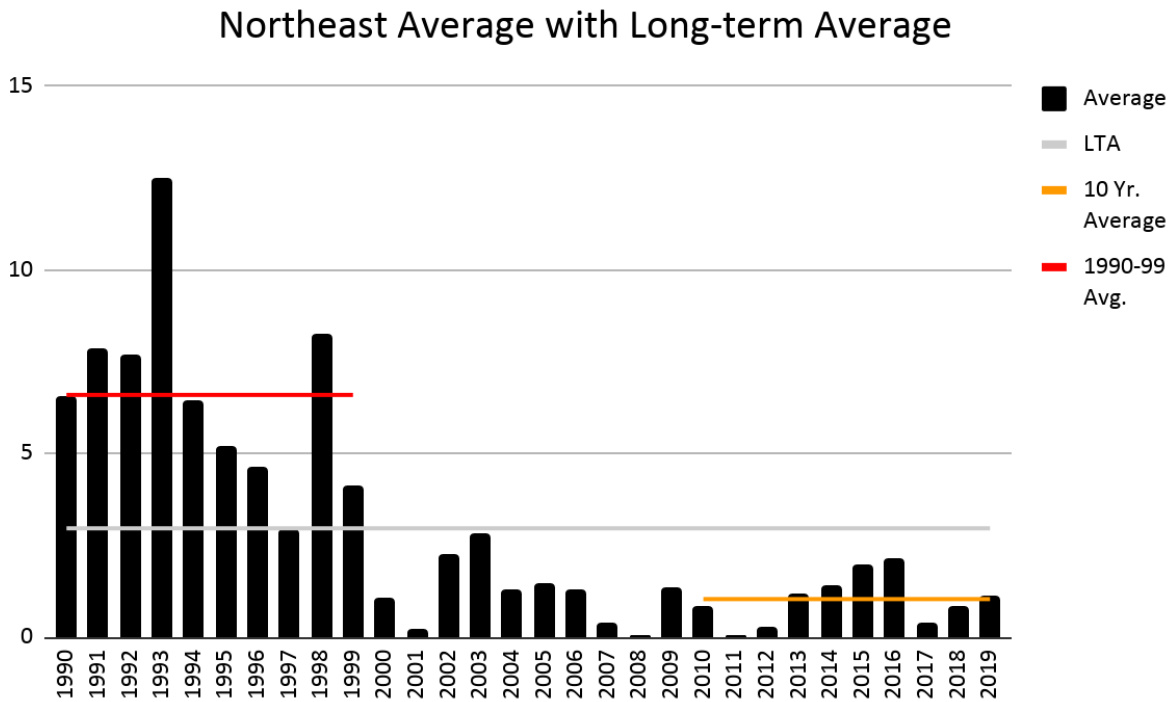


Figure 4. Long-term average of bobwhites in northcentral Oklahoma.

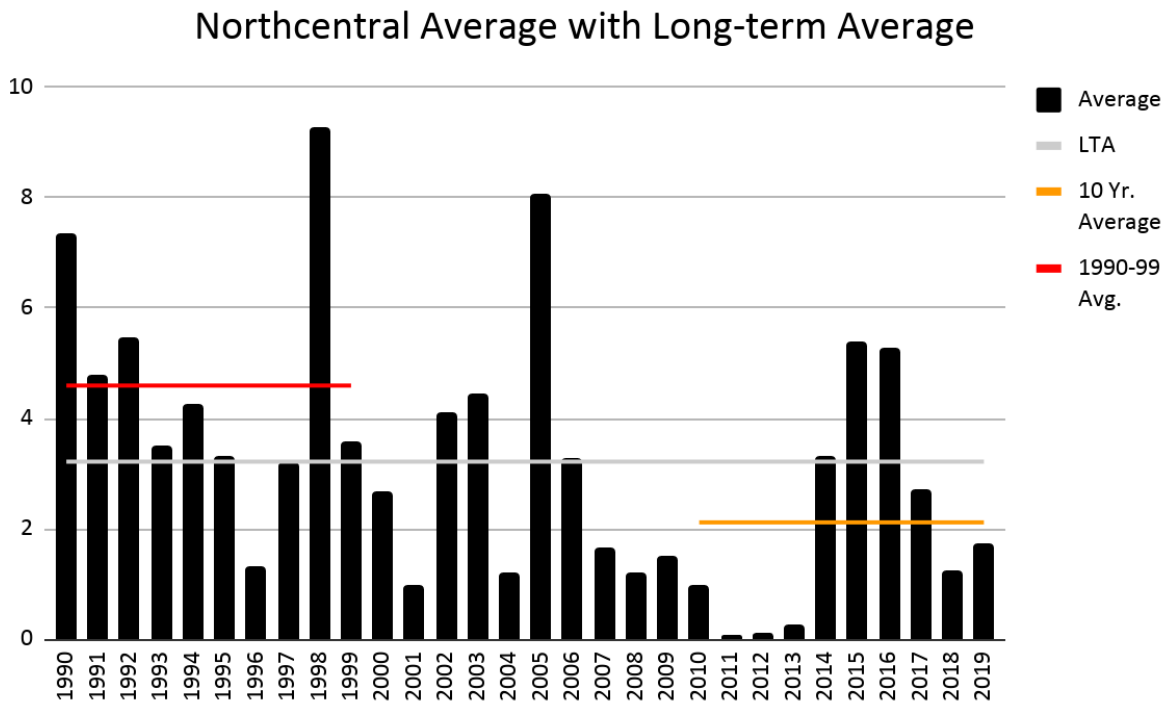


Figure 5. Long-term average of bobwhites in southwest Oklahoma.

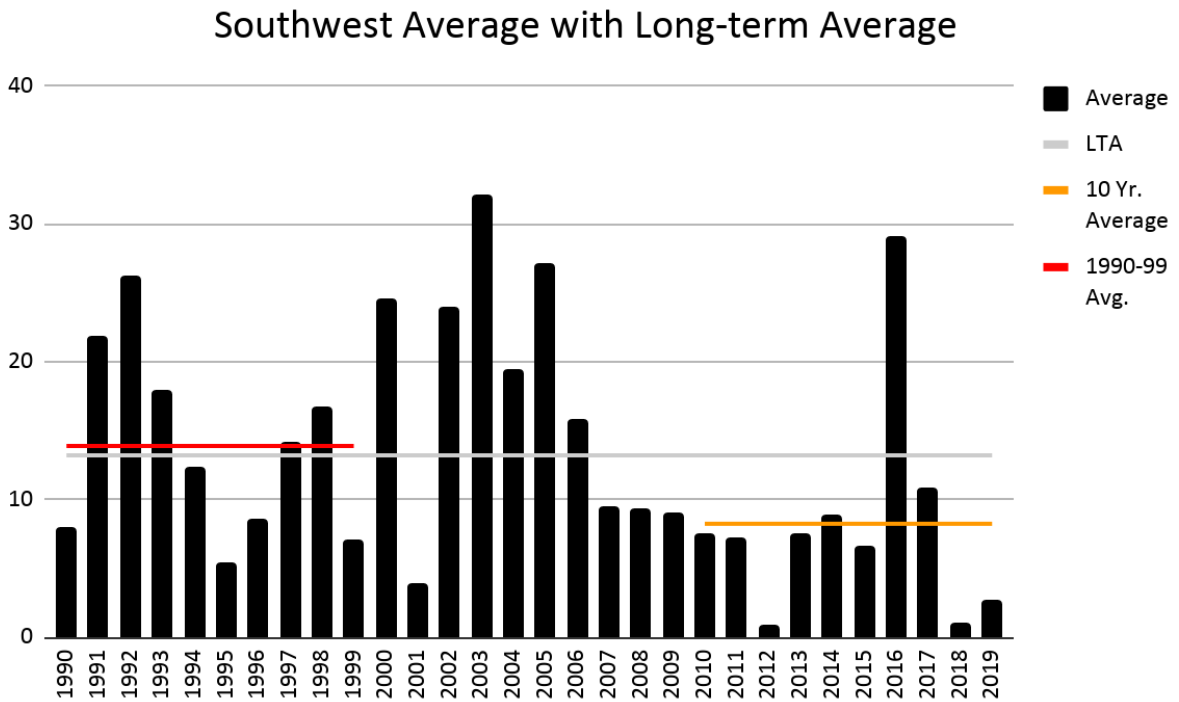


Figure 6. Long-term average of bobwhites in southeast Oklahoma.

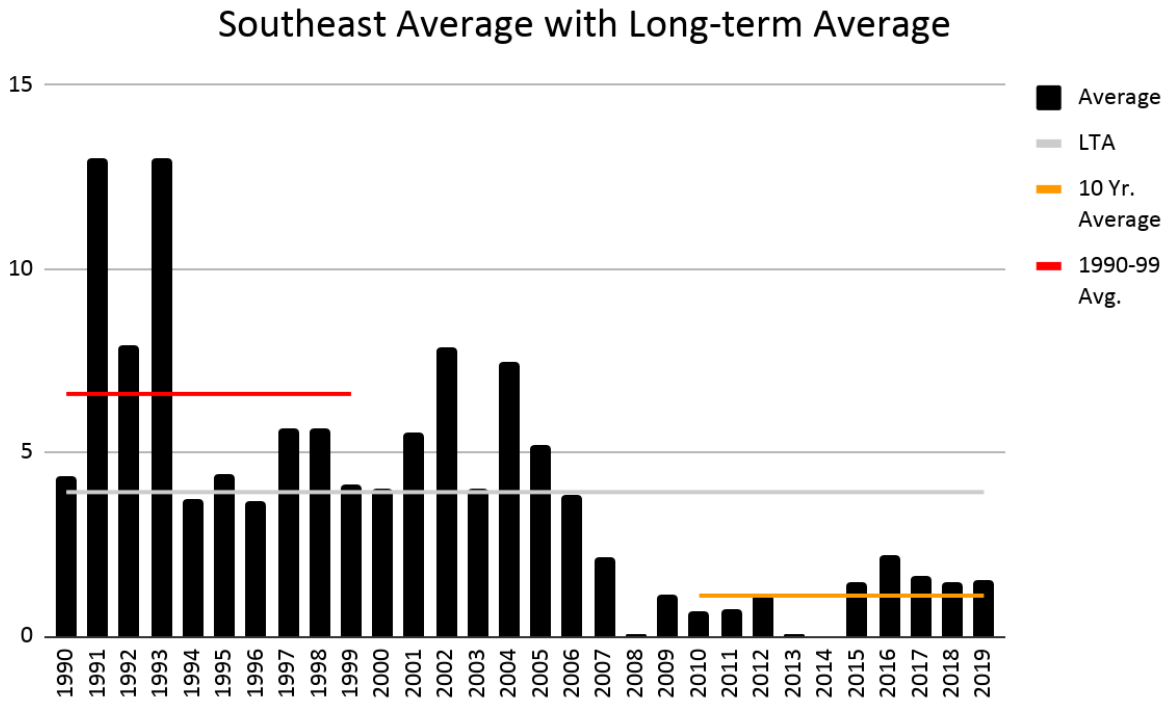


Figure 7. Long-term average of bobwhites in southcentral Oklahoma.

