



2025 Pheasant Season Update

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2025 pheasant numbers trending up; yet below long-term averages

Ring-necked pheasants remain a popular upland game species among Oklahoma hunters. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation monitors the pheasant population through two surveys: spring crow counts and summer brood surveys. With low observation numbers these roadside surveys can have a wide degree of variability, but the consistency of the survey methodology over time allows us to interpret the information on a historical scale. The data collected provides an index of the spring breeding population (crow counts) and recruitment success for that year (brood surveys). Traditionally Alfalfa, Beaver, Cimarron, Grant, and Texas Counties have held the highest pheasant numbers. These 5 counties have had spring crow surveys since 1973, and brood surveys since 1980. In 1998, the surveys were expanded to 13 counties to include Ellis, Garfield, Harper, Kay, Major, Noble, Woods, and Woodward (Figure 1).

The spring 2025 crow count survey showed an increase in number of calls heard per point over 2024 (Figure 2). Weather patterns throughout the spring and early summer were fairly mild with more precipitation. Looking at the numbers from 1973 to 2025 there is an overall positive trend in the number of calls heard during the spring crow call count surveys, however index numbers for both crow and brood surveys remain well below the long-term average. The August brood surveys have shown a slow steady increase over the last 5 years in the statewide average (Figure 3). The 5 traditional counties were down slightly from 0.05 broods/mile in 2024 to 0.02 in 2025. The total number of pheasants observed was also down from 68 in 2024 to 44 in 2025. Improved habitat conditions along survey routes as well as weather patterns during the survey periods could account for some of the lower observations.

Much like years' past – 2025 has seen the ups and downs that define Oklahoma's weather. The '24-'25 season kicked off with ~47% of the state in some level of drought which improved steadily through the growing season (Figure 5). As the year continued, weather patterns brought timely rains that led to excellent conditions for the nesting season. By June, Oklahoma had become 'drought-free' for the first time in nearly 6 years. July and August started to see drought creep back into the state, however, a milder summer with only a few areas seeing more than 20 days above 100°F lessened the negative impacts. As of mid-October, only ~5% of the state is now in Severe (D2) or Extreme (D3) Drought conditions and over 70% of the state listed as at least Abnormally Dry (Figures 4 & 5). Current climate models forecast a shift back to those more neutral El Niño/La Niña patterns by early next

spring which could once again help benefit pheasant and their habitat conditions across the state.

Pheasant hunters this season will likely find pockets of fair pheasant numbers in areas with good habitat.

2025 Pheasant Season information

Pheasant season opens on December 1st, 2025 and runs through January 31st, 2026.

Hunters are allowed to harvest two cock pheasant daily. For additional resources and tips check out wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/resources/pheasant

Open areas include Alfalfa, Beaver, Cimarron, Garfield, Grant, Harper, Kay, Major, Noble, Osage, Texas, Woods, and Woodward counties; and the portions of Blaine, Dewey, Ellis, Kingfisher, and Logan counties north of State Highway 51.

New for 2025: The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission adopted new rules that require nonresidents accessing certain Oklahoma public hunting and fishing areas to check in and check out of that area via the GoOutdoorsOK app/GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. Non-resident game bird hunters will also be required to possess a Nonresident Game Bird Permit if hunting any game birds on any WMA in Oklahoma. For more detailed regulations and other information consult the Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Guide online at <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/regs> or in print wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

Ultimately, remember the outdoors are always open!

Work some ground, trust your dog, and make a memory!

Enjoying the Oklahoma Outdoors!

Figure 1: Traditional and Non-traditional Pheasant Survey areas

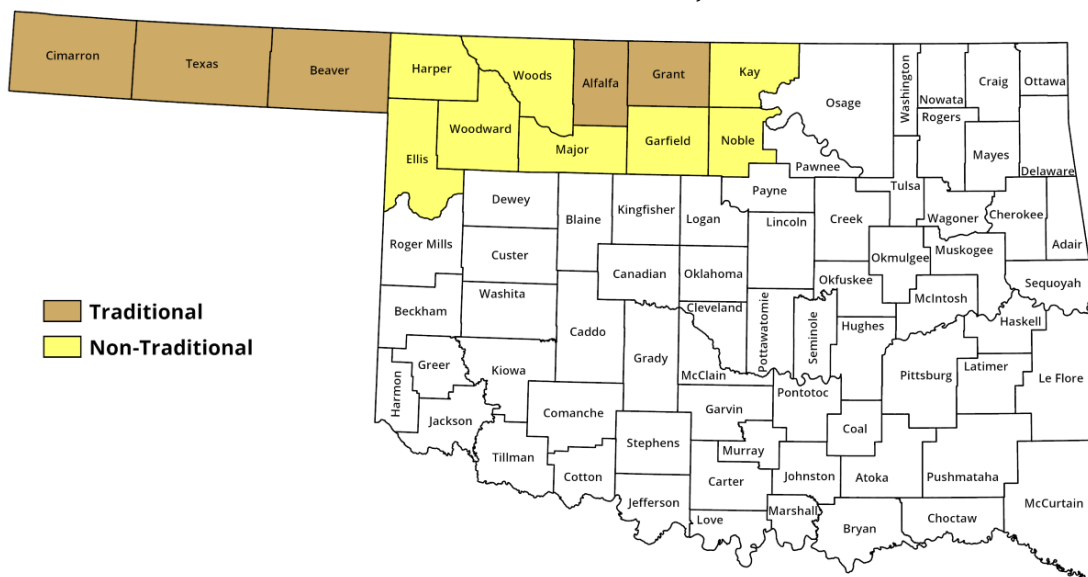


Figure 2: Pheasant crows heard per point (1998 – 2025)

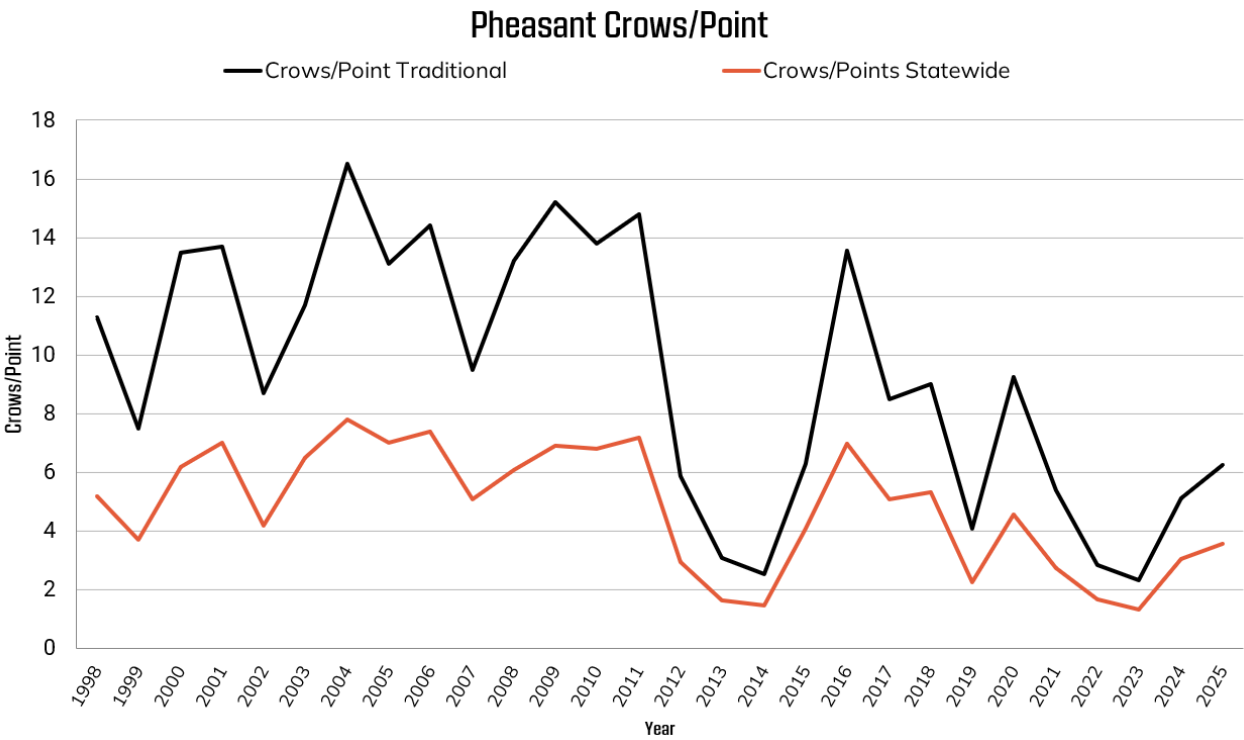


Figure 3: Pheasant broods observed per mile (1998 – 2025)

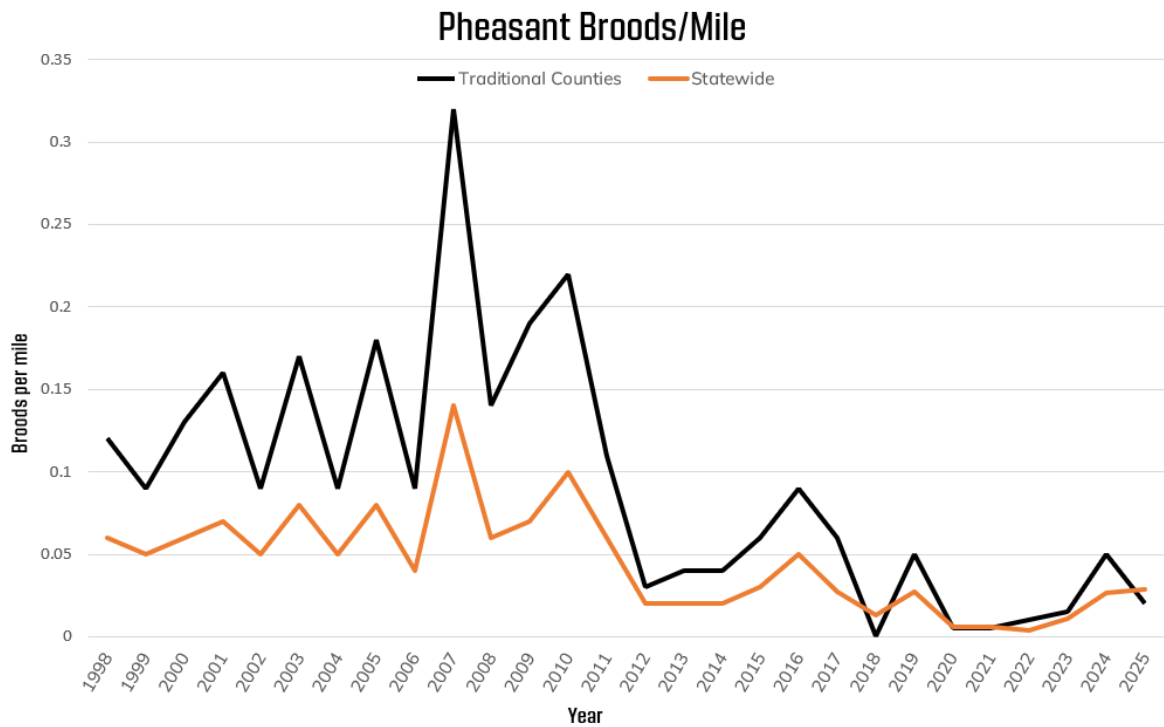


Figure 4: Oklahoma Drought Monitor Comparison (Source: droughtmonitor.unl.edu/)

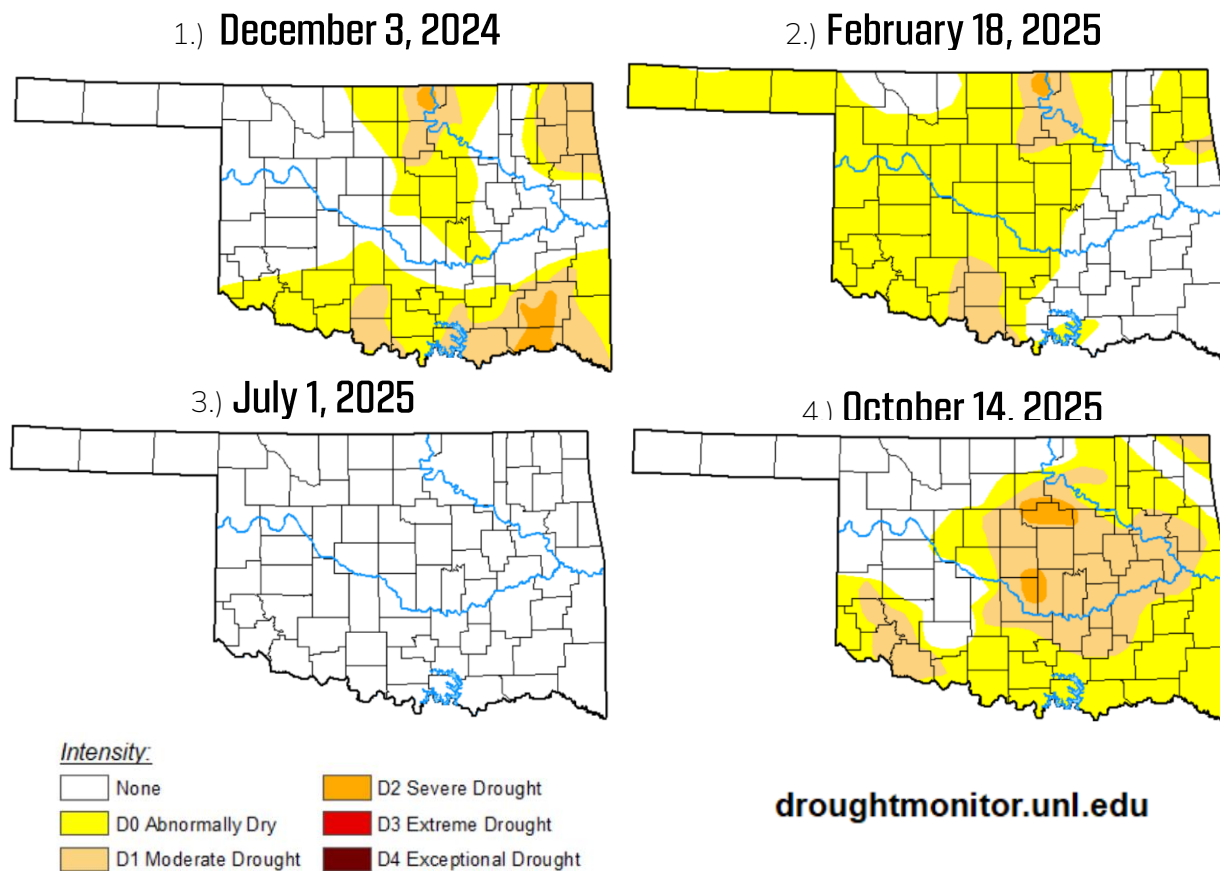


Figure 5: Departure from normal rainfall June 23, 2025 through October 20, 2025 (Source: climate.ok.gov)

