

2026 August Quail and Pheasant Roadside Survey Results

Summary

- Statewide quail abundance was the same as 2025
- Four of the zoogeographic regions showed increases, three showed decreases, one was the same as 2025
- Areas with good habitat have reported good productivity and increased quail numbers
- Ring-necked pheasant numbers showed a slight decrease (8%) over 2025

Northern Bobwhite Abundance

Conservation Agents conducted roadside counts of bobwhite quail from August 1-15 in 111 of Missouri's 114 counties. Clay, Jackson, and St. Louis counties are not included because they are high density urban areas near Kansas City and St. Louis. Surveyors count the number of quail observed while driving ≤ 20 miles per hour along permanent 30-mile mostly gravel road routes. Participants are instructed to conduct counts beginning at sunrise on clear, dewy mornings with light winds to increase chances that bobwhite will be near roadsides. These observations are used to provide an index of quail abundance across the landscape. Because only a small portion of each county is sampled, the index best represents quail population trends at large scales, such as statewide and multi-county blocks such as the zoogeographic region. The statewide long-term trend of the index closely follows other large-scale indices of abundance, including the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Missouri quail harvest estimates. The roadside survey routes are run almost entirely through private land, so this quail index is representative of conditions on Missouri's private lands.

This year's statewide index of 1.68 quail per 30-mile route is equal to last year's index. Winter weather was fairly mild throughout the state, and winter precipitation was near normal. Spring brought heavier than normal precipitation in the northern and central portions of the state while the southern part of the state remained dry. Summer brought some locally heavy precipitation events though the central and southeastern portion of the state. Where there is good habitat, there has been an uptick in quail brood sightings, including many later hatched birds.

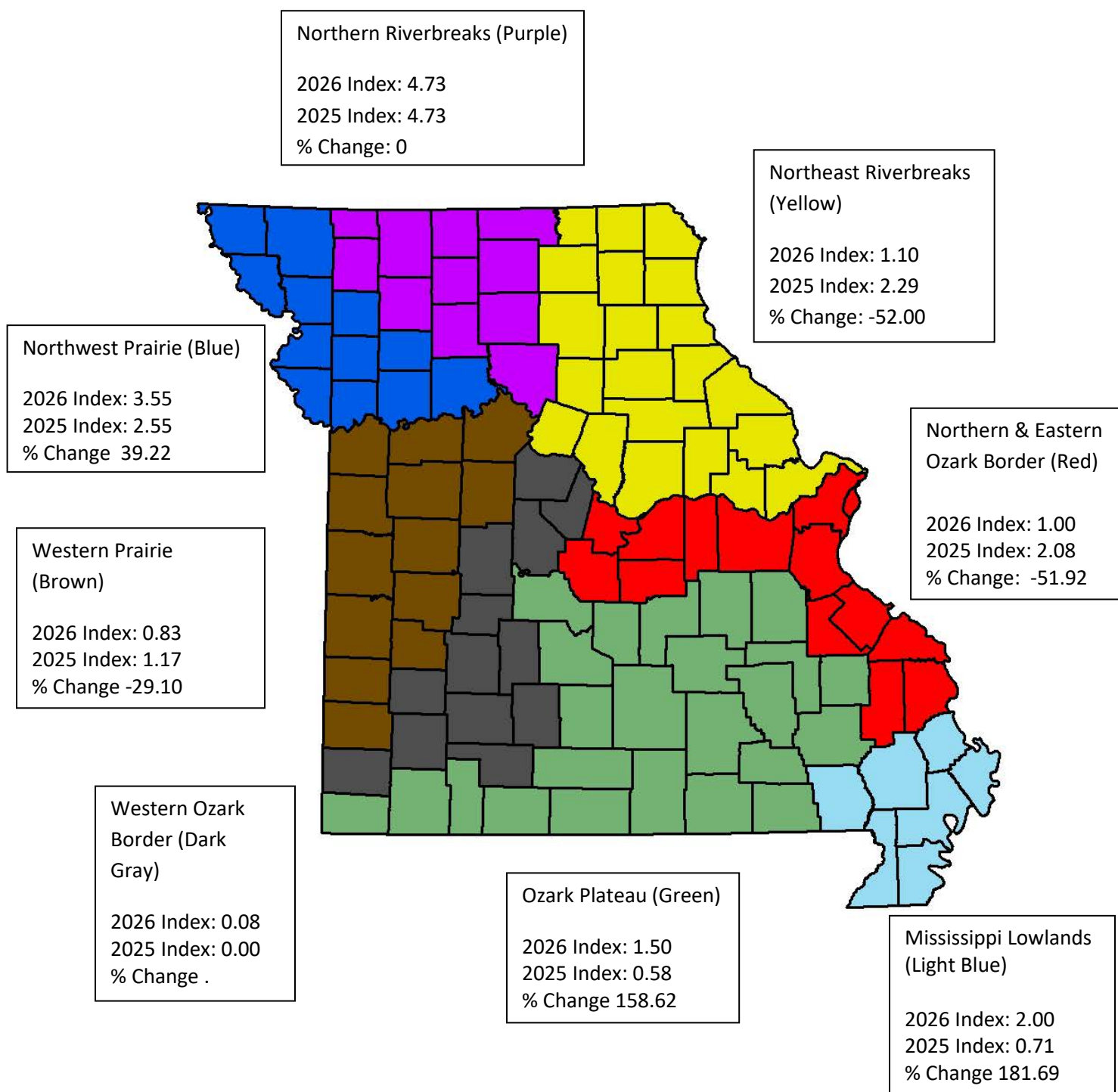
Ring-necked Pheasant Abundance

The Conservation Agents' Roadside Survey counts the number of pheasants observed along 72 standardized 30-mile routes (a subset of the routes sampled for bobwhites) during August 1-15. The 2026 survey showed a slight decrease in Missouri's pheasant index. The 2026 statewide count of 0.23 pheasants per 30-mile route was down 8% compared to 2025. The pheasant range in Missouri is limited to the northern third of the state. Pheasants should have had good overwinter survival and decent nesting conditions this year. Continued loss of habitat, especially those enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program lands continues to negatively impact on overall pheasant populations in Northern Missouri.

Average number of quail counted per 30-mile route by Conservation Agents in 111 counties during August 1-15, 2026. (". " indicates that percent change cannot be calculated due to a zero value in the denominator).

Zoogeographic Region	# of counties run in 2026	# of Quail Counted 2026	# of Quail Counted 2025	% Change 2025-2026
Northwest Prairie	11	3.55	2.55	39.22
Northern Riverbreaks	11	4.73	4.73	0
Northeast Riverbreaks	21	1.10	2.29	-52.00
Western Prairie	12	0.83	1.17	-29.10
Western Ozark Border	13	0.08	0.00	.
Ozark Plateau	24	1.50	0.58	158.62
Northern and Eastern Ozark Border	12	1.00	2.08	-51.92
Mississippi Lowlands	7	2.00	0.71	181.69
Statewide	111	1.68	1.68	0

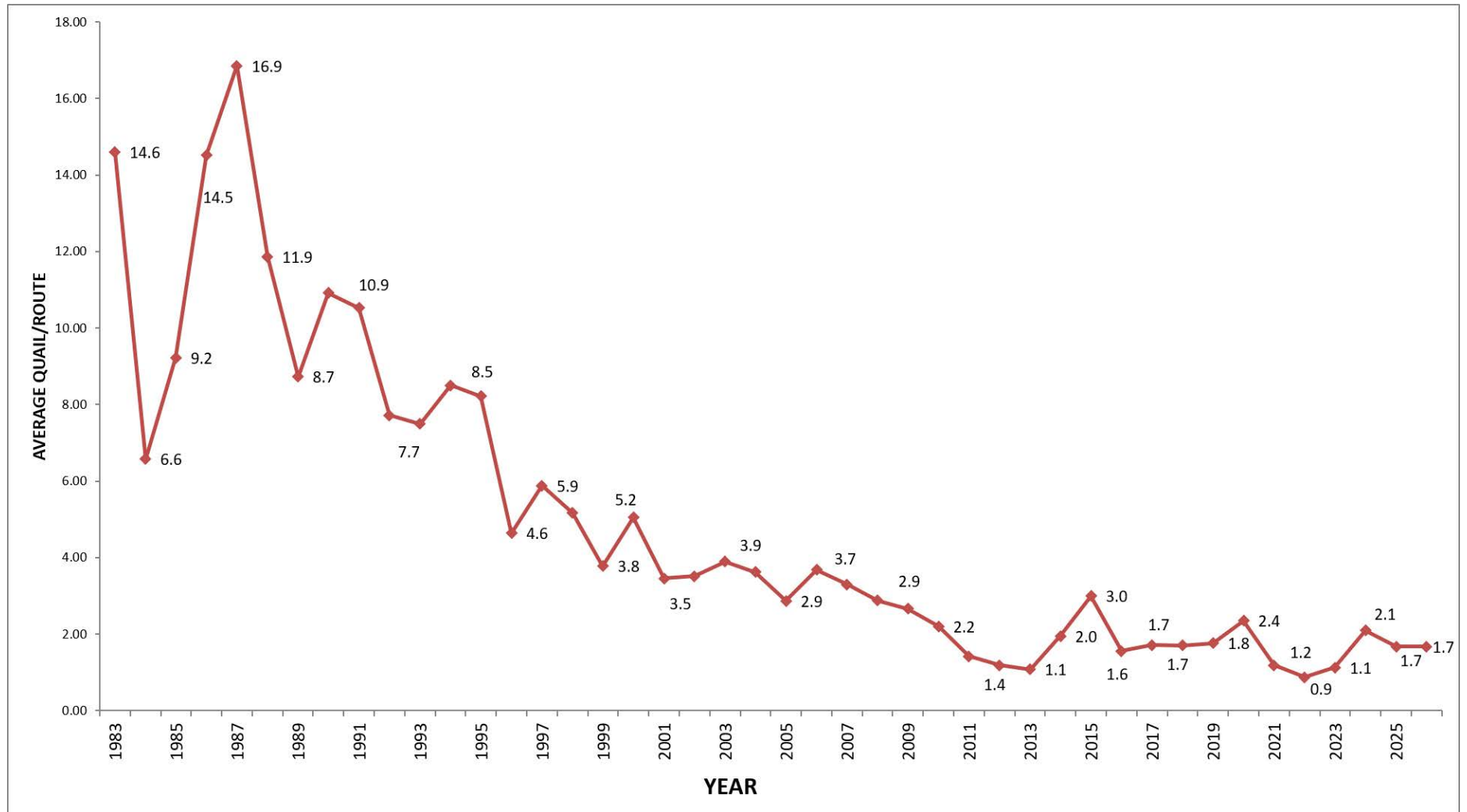
Map of zoogeographic regions in Missouri showing the 2026 and 2025 quail roadside index and the 2-year percent change. (".") indicates that percent change cannot be calculated due to a zero value in the denominator).



Average number of pheasants counted per 30-mile route by Conservation Agents along 72 routes during August 1-15, 2026 (". " indicates that percent change cannot be calculated due to a zero value in the denominator).

Zoogeographic Region	# of routes run in 2026	# of Pheasants Counted 2026	# of Pheasants Counted 2025	% Change 2025-2026
Northwest Prairie	19	0.11	0.22	-50.00
Northern Riverbreaks	21	0.29	0.33	-12.12
Northeast Riverbreaks	24	0.38	0.29	31.03
Western Prairie	3	0	0	.
Mississippi Lowlands	6	0	0	.
Statewide	73	0.23	0.25	-8.00

Average number of quail observed per route on the August Roadside Survey from 1983-2026.



Average number of quail per route by zoogeographic region from 1983-2026.

