

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project №: W-15-R-82
Title of Job: 2025 Northern Bobwhite Whistle Count Survey

Job: H1



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21 July 2025

Northern bobwhite whistle counts were conducted between 16 June and 10 July 2025, inclusively within each of the 6 bobwhite management zones (Figure 1). A total of 55 routes were surveyed in 2025 by Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and Pheasants/Quail Forever partnership staff. Along each 20-mile route, observers made stops one mile apart and conducted an auditory survey to quantify the number of unique male bobwhites calling.

Caveats. The bobwhite whistle count survey does not provide information on bobwhite population size but is an index of breeding male abundance. At a statewide scale, these indices are correlated with harvest and are useful for forecasting conditions hunters might encounter during the fall hunting season, particularly when combined with the results from other surveys.

Interpretations. This year's statewide bobwhite index showed strong increases and was 68% above the 5-year mean. Relative abundance widely increased everywhere except for the Northeast region that decreased slightly. There appears to be distinct gaps between North Central and Northeast region with the lowest indices, Republican, Southeast, and West Platte with higher indices, and East Central with the highest abundance indices.

Take-home Message. Nebraska's bobwhites are at the northernmost extent of their range in the U.S. and their abundance here may experience greater fluctuations in response to environmental conditions than in the core areas of the species' range. Bobwhite abundance remains highest across southern Nebraska (core range in Nebraska). Nest success will continue to be an important factor for this year's fall population, but breeding populations looked good going into the nesting season. Mild winter weather conditions likely benefited breeding populations which gives the potential for good hunting opportunities come fall. Nesting and brooding habitats look good with abundant moisture this summer, but production could be impacted at local scales due to severe weather events. Late summer and early fall surveys will be beneficial in adding to whistle counts to determine fall hunting populations.



Table 1. Mean number of calling male bobwhites heard per stop along roadsides during the 2025 bobwhite whistle count survey, by bobwhite management zone (Figure 1).

Zone	Number of Routes	Calling Males per Stop:		
		2025 \bar{x} & 90% CI	2024 \bar{x} & 90% CI	2020-2024 \bar{x} & 90% CI
East Central	4	2.45 (2.24-2.65)	1.03 (0.00-2.09)	1.21 (0.93-1.47)
North Central	8	0.61 (0.53-0.69)	0.33 (0.13-0.53)	0.25 (0.19-0.31)
Northeast	7	0.58 (0.52-0.64)	0.59 (0.09-1.08)	0.52 (0.39-0.64)
Republican	10	1.91 (1.73-2.09)	1.09 (0.40-0.53)	1.05 (0.86-1.25)
Southeast	14	1.89 (1.81-1.95)	1.77 (1.47-2.06)	1.34 (1.20-1.48)
West Platte	12	1.46 (1.27-1.66)	0.91 (0.30-1.52)	0.68 (0.52-0.83)
Statewide	55	1.43 (1.37-1.49)	1.04 (0.82-1.27)	0.85 (0.77-0.92)

Table 2. Percent change in the mean number of calling males heard during the 2025 bobwhite whistle count survey from 2024 and the 5-year mean, by bobwhite management zone (Figure 1).

Zone	Percent Difference from:	
	2024 Mean	2020-2024 Mean
East Central	137	102
North Central	84	144
Northeast	-2	11
Republican	75	82
Southeast	7	41
West Platte	60	114
Statewide	38	68

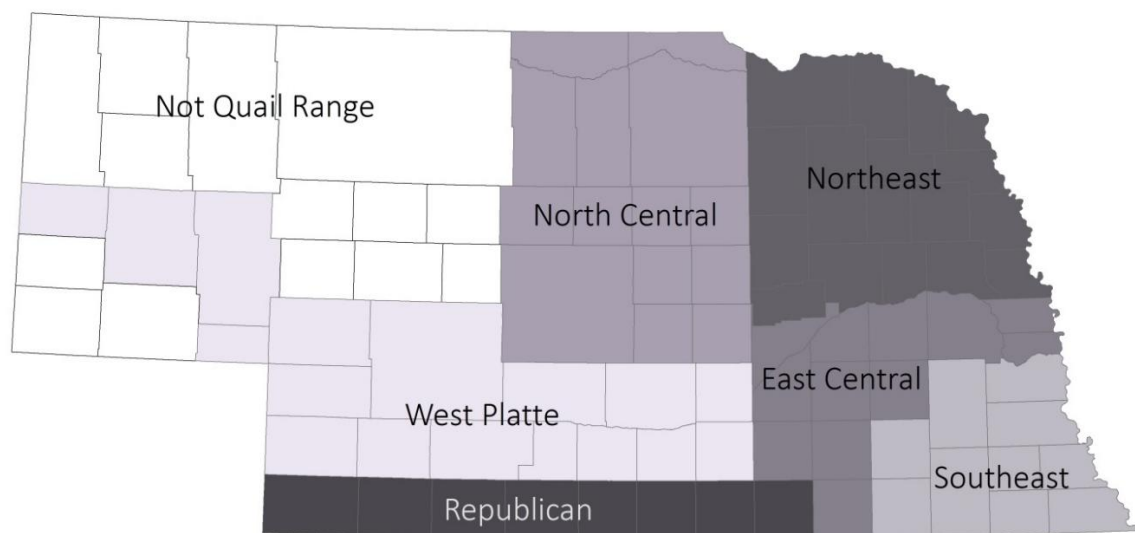
Figure 1. Bobwhite management zones.

Figure 2. Time series (1965-2025) of the mean number of calling bobwhites heard per stop during the whistle count survey, by bobwhite management zone (Figure 1).

