

Ten Week Brood Observations 2014

by Jes Rees

Abstract

With nearly average temperatures and precipitation across the state, the spring of 2014 delivered good breeding and brooding rearing conditions for the game bird species in the state. Statewide monthly temperature averages for June and August were close to the long-term normal monthly temperatures. The month of July was approximately 5 degrees below the normal monthly statewide temperature. Precipitation in June and August were above the statewide normal monthly precipitation, approximately 3 inches in June and 1 inch in August. Precipitation in July was below the statewide normal monthly, approximately 1.5 inches. Turkey and ruffed grouse broods counted per observer in 2014 increased from 2013 levels. Pheasant broods counted per observer decreased slightly from 2013 levels, and gray partridge remained the same, with zero broods reported. Participation in the 2014 Ten Week Brood Survey was at its 2nd lowest level in the 44 year history of the survey.

Methods

An e-mail containing an electronic survey form was sent to all department field personnel. Field personnel were asked to record the number of gray partridge, ring-necked pheasant, ruffed grouse, and wild turkey broods observed while doing normal field operations. The survey period began the second week in June and ended the third week of August, 2014. When one of the four species was observed with a brood, participants recorded the date, county of the observation, number of young in the brood, and whether all the young in the brood were counted. A summary form was e-mailed at the end of August to all field personnel. On the summary form, participants reported all brood observations, the percent of their time spent in the field, and whether they or others that worked for them collected the observations. These forms were returned to Wildlife Surveys and the data were entered into the DNR production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

Two hundred and forty two (242) observers sent back 182 surveys, reporting their observations of game broods of gray partridge, ring-necked pheasant, ruffed grouse, and wild turkey in the summer of 2014. The number of observers decreased from 2013 to 2014 by -2%, but the number of surveys returned by these observers increased from the previous year.

Much of Wisconsin had normal brood rearing conditions in 2014. Conditions were average for temperature during much of the brood rearing season. Precipitation was above average for much of the state for the months of June and August with below average precipitation for the months of July.

Gray Partridge

No Gray Partridge broods were seen in 2014, the same as 2013. Small pockets of gray partridge still exist in areas of the state but not at levels that are detectable by this survey method or in the numbers they have in the past (Fig 1). Observers have seen 10 or fewer gray partridge broods now for over a decade.

Ring-necked Pheasant

Pheasant broods seen per observer hour were up 25% in 2014 compared to last year. Pheasant production was down in the primary pheasant range 12% from the 2013 level, but increased 108% in the rest of the state. Pheasant brood size was down slightly, with an average of 4.95 young per brood in 2014 vs. 5.02 in 2013. The average number of broods per observer was below the long-term (1970-2014) mean of 0.49.

Ruffed Grouse

The average number of ruffed grouse broods observed during the ten week period per field participant in 2014 was 0.68 (Fig. 3). Broods per observer increased 15% from 2013 when 0.59 broods per observer were recorded. The average number of broods observed was below the long-term (1970-2014) mean of 1.24 broods per observer. The number of young observed per brood in 2014 was 4.01, up from the 3.92 observed the last year.

Wild Turkey

Wild Turkey broods seen per observer increased from the previous year, 3.38 in 2014 vs. 2.82 in 2013 (Fig 4). Broods per observer increased 20% and is above the long-term (1987-2014) mean of 1.98 broods per observer. The average brood size (4.5) for 2014 is up slightly from the 4.3 observed in 2013.

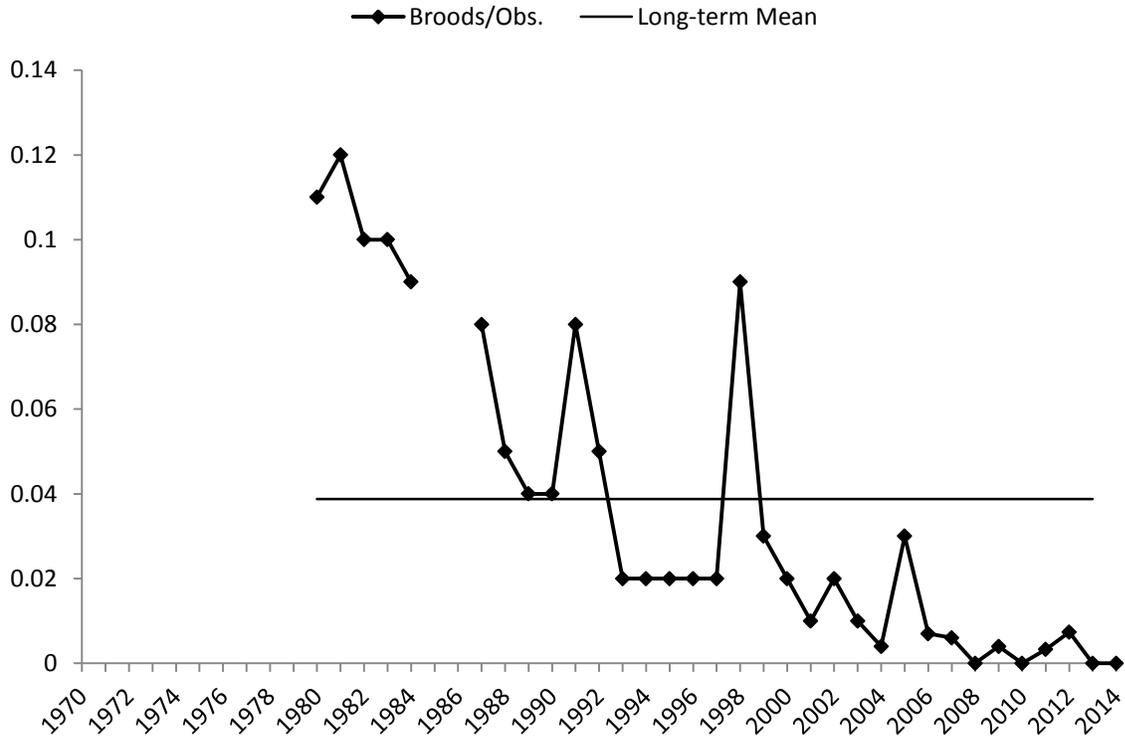


Figure 1. Number of gray partridge broods per observer 1980-2014.

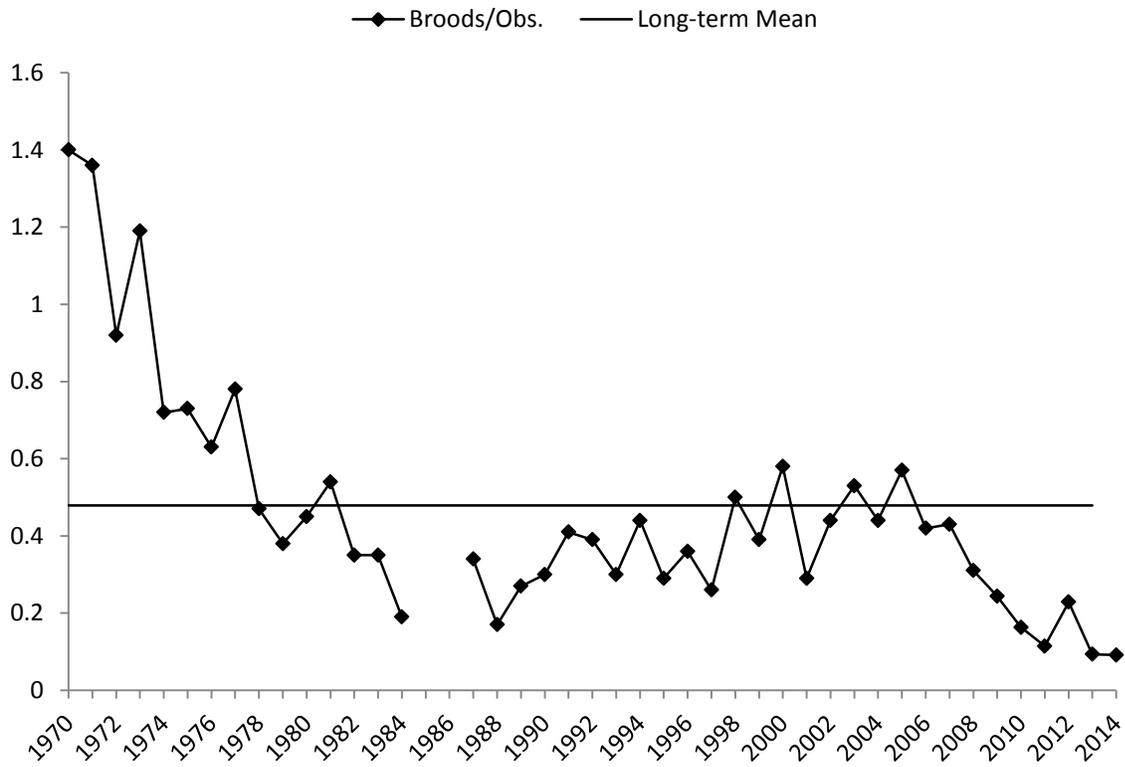


Figure 2. Number of ring-necked pheasant broods seen per observer 1970-2014.

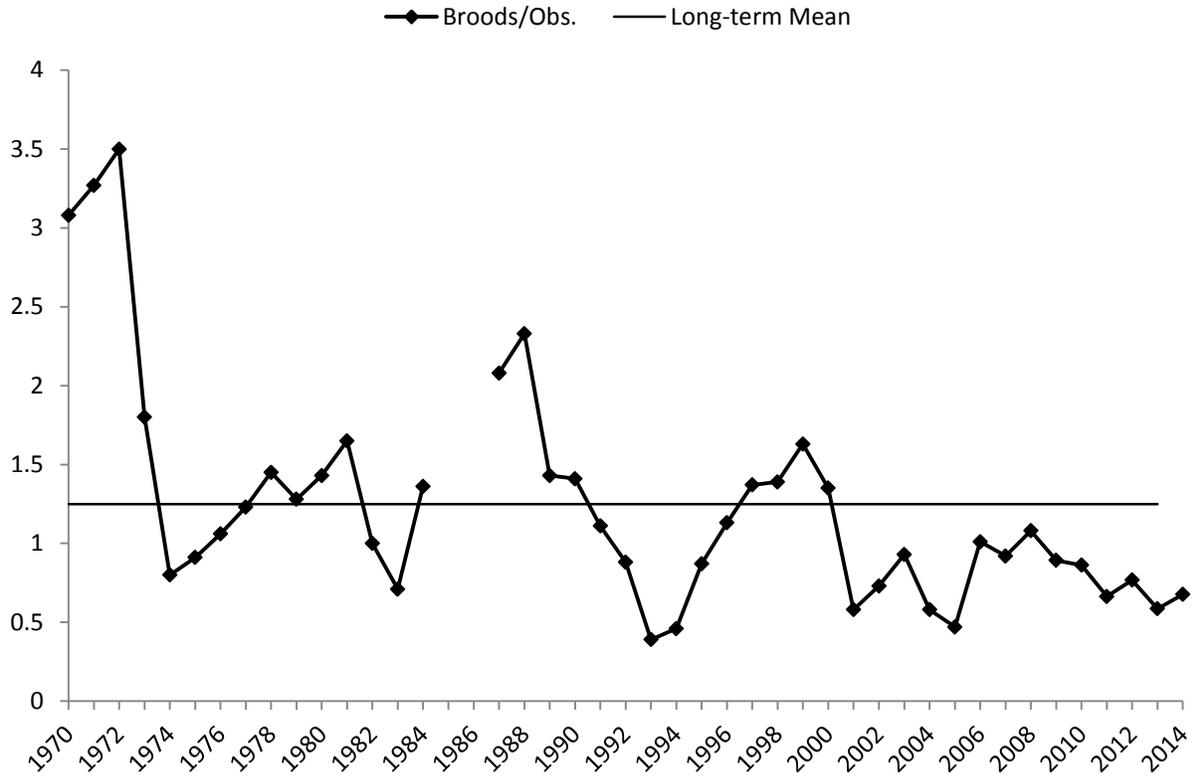


Figure 3. Number of ruffed grouse broods seen per observer 1970-2014.

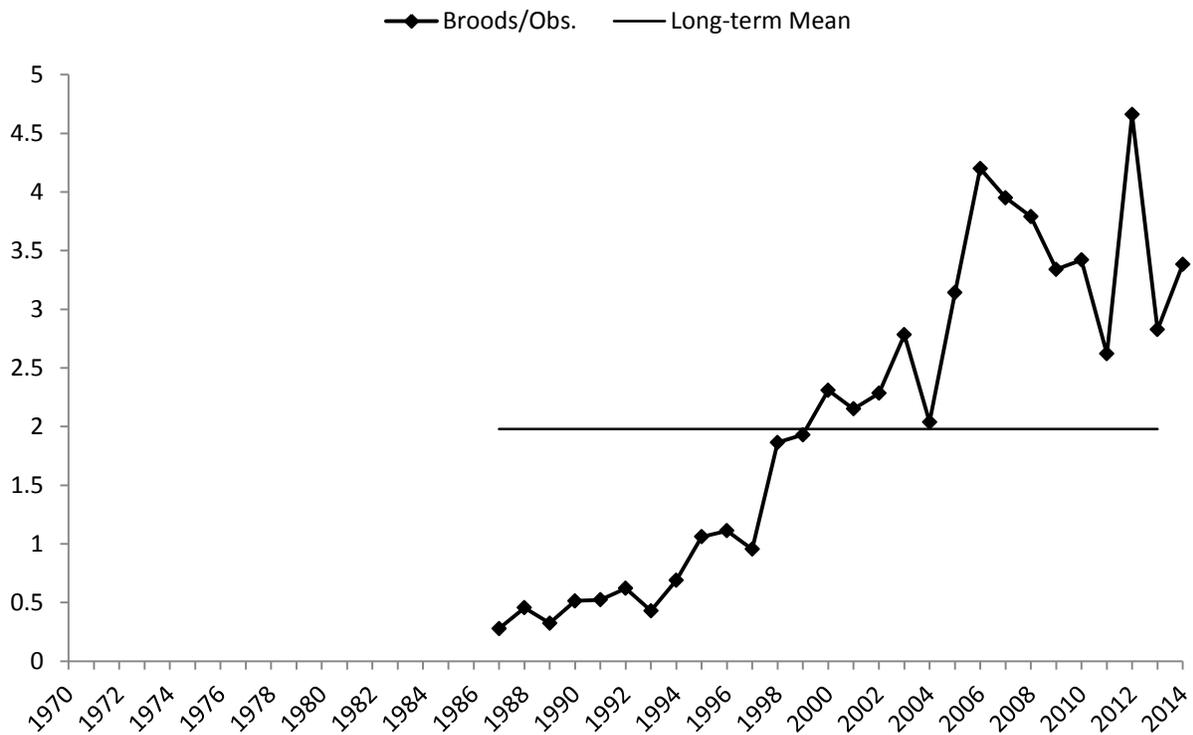


Figure 4. Number of wild turkey broods seen per observer 1987-2014.