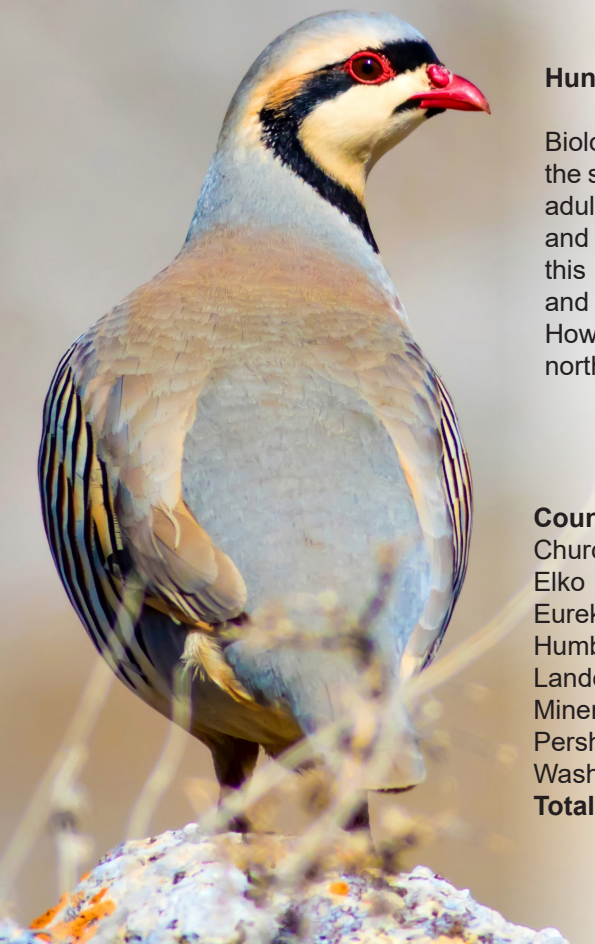
NEVADA CHUKAR FORECAST 2024-2025

During the summer of 2024, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) regional biologists conducted a series of chukar brood surveys across central and northern Nevada. These surveys do not represent a comprehensive cross section or index of chukar populations across Nevada, but instead are meant to provide upland game hunters with general information on chukar productivity in various areas, thereby offering suggestions of more promising counties to hunt.

During late July and throughout August, 59 areas were surveyed across western and eastern Nevada counties. Condensed results are presented below in Table 1. Survey routes conducted within individual Hunt Units were further pooled by counties to obtain adequate sample sizes and provide a general representation of production by region. Overall, the calculated statewide average production value was 4.8 chicks per adult. This represents a 20% decrease in production compared to the 2023 value of 6.0 chicks per adult, however, biologists recorded a significant amount of carryover birds from last season in aggregates without broods, which lowered the chicks per adult value. From a statewide perspective, this year's production value still represents that which is necessary to increase chukar populations. For the 2024 season, some areas of Pershing County, Churchill County, Mineral County, Eureka County, Lander County, Washoe County and many areas in northeastern Nevada, will provide quality chukar hunting opportunities. Overall, base populations of chukar are above average and production was promising. Seven out of the 8 counties this season showed production values over the 4.5 threshold; only Pershing County was below with 3.3 chicks per adult.

Starting in 2022 and carrying through 2024, NDOW approved the Southern Nevada Chapter of Quail Forever to begin conducting small game surveys using trail cameras to establish an additional methodology and data collection baseline for Gambel's quail, mountain quail and chukar across the southern region. Data collection sites were aimed at small game guzzlers and natural springs identified by NDOW Game Division biologists. The protocol and general methodology were developed for chukar counts by the Utah Division of Wildlife. In total, 28 cameras were placed at water sites in Clark County, Lincoln County and Nye County. Photos were identified and counted within 30-minute windows and both adult and juvenile chukar were recorded. As expected, count data densities were lower when compared to the western and eastern region surveys. Overall production was slightly down from last year. Chicks per adult values showed 7.3 for northern Clark County and 2.0 for Nye County; no birds were recorded in Lincoln County. Although chukar densities remain lower for the southern region, these numbers do highlight additional opportunities to hunt chukar for upland hunters in the southern region, especially when coupled with a Gambel's quail hunt. NDOW would like to thank the Southern Nevada Chapter of Quail Forever for their continued support and countless hours of hard work represented in this data collection effort and looks forward to continuing partnering on this study project.



Hungarian Partridge:

Biologists in the Eastern Region recorded encounters with Hungarian Partridge during the summer months. A total of 50 adults and 277 chicks were classified for a chicks per adult ratio of 5.5:1. Survey numbers are significantly up from 2023, which is encouraging and represents additional upland game bird opportunities. Folks interested in hunting this species should look to the areas east of the Santa Rosa Range, Independence and Tuscarora Ranges, and public lands around the flanks of the Ruby Mountains. However, do not be surprised if you encounter Hungarian Partridge while hunting the northwestern counties, as occurrences are becoming more frequent.

Chukar Brood Survey Results Summary for 2024

County	Adults	Young	Total Birds	Young/Adult
Churchill	196	1,285	1,481	6.6
Elko	225	1,093	1,318	4.9
Eureka	244	1,187	1,431	4.9
Humboldt	186	1,289	1,475	6.9
Lander	198	1,029	1,227	5.2
Mineral	37	209	246	5.6
Pershing	731	2,395	2,136	3.3
Washoe	74	528	602	7.1
Totals:	**1,891**	**9,015**	**10,906**	**4.8**

Results of these surveys should be tempered by the total number of birds observed. A sample size exceeding 100 birds is likely reasonable to estimate production with confidence while bird totals within the 50-100 realm should be viewed with caution. Anything less than 50 birds observed is considered merely anecdotal. Generally, a production value that exceeds 4.5 chicks per adult should yield sustainable to slightly increasing populations. Production and the total number of birds observed is graphically depicted and summarized in Figure 1 by hunt unit or hunt unit groups.

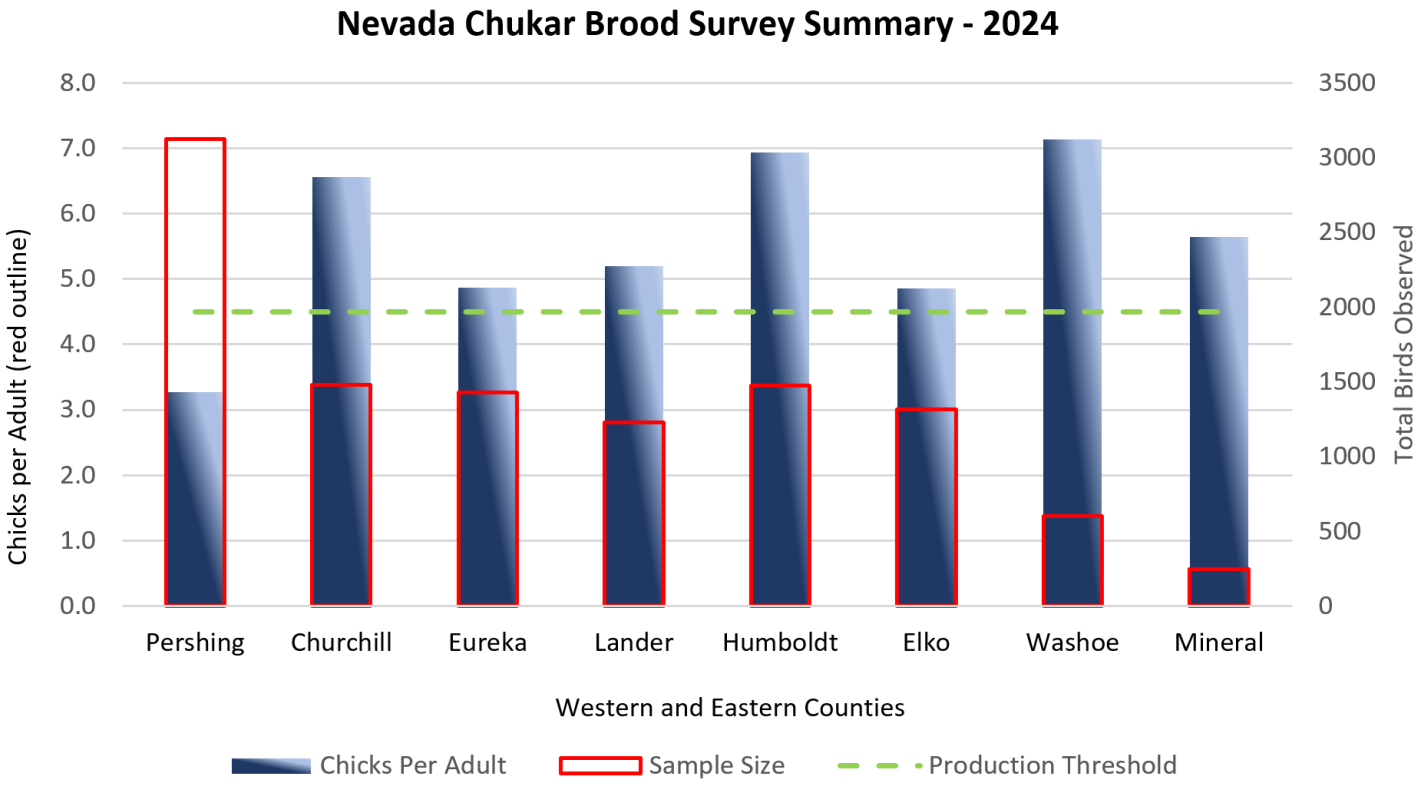


Figure 1. Birds observed and estimated production during the 2024 chukar brood survey. Ideally, total birds (sample size, blue column) would extend beyond the sample threshold of 100 birds and production values would exceed the production threshold of 4.5 chicks per adult.

The following provides some general descriptions of what to expect for chukar hunting this fall for several Nevada Counties:

Churchill County: Survey results this year continue to paint a positive picture and chukar hunters should be pleased with what they find in most mountain ranges in Churchill County. Above average winter and spring moisture received throughout the county improved habitat conditions and has likely increased bird distribution.

Elko County: For 2024, most hunt units or unit groups exceeded the sample and production thresholds. For less experienced chukar hunters and those hunters that do not know the county well, Elko County can be challenging as birds can be distributed widely across the landscape. However, with increased bird numbers this season, it should be good year to gain understanding on where to find birds and improve opportunities.

Eureka County: Portions of Eureka County will offer some good chukar hunting while others can be considered fair. Sample sizes increase from last season for western and eastern portions of the county. Good hunting opportunities should exist, particularly during the winter months if ample snowfall is received to push birds to lower elevations.

Humboldt County: Chukar numbers are up from last season. Good chukar hunting during the season should be found across the county. Do not be surprised if Hungarian Partridge are encountered as opportunities are expanding across the county. Although the summer months have been dry, survey results show birds to be widely distributed.

Lander County: Look for mountain ranges in this county to have increase bird numbers compared to last season. Chicks per adult values remained consistent with last season. Hunting across the county should prove better than last season, with good distribution and numbers across the county.

Pershing County (West): Several western mountain ranges in Pershing County should provide good chukar hunting compared to last season. Overall production did not improve substantially, but sample size increased significantly, likely from carryover birds from the 2023 season and should present additional hunt opportunities.

Pershing County (East): This year proved more fruitful than last season for several eastern Pershing County ranges with an increase in sample size and production showed 5.2 chicks per adult. High numbers of wild horses are still having a negative impact on habitat conditions in southeastern Pershing County and portions of northeastern Churchill County.

Washoe County: Survey results reflected an increase in production and bird numbers this season should transfer to a fruitful year for mountain ranges in northern Washoe County for chukar. In addition to formal surveys, anecdotal observations indicated good distribution and numbers throughout the county as well. With two years of above average winter snowfall and spring precipitation, habitat conditions continued to improve and receive a reprieve from the extreme drought conditions prior to the 2022-2023 winter.