

Chestnut-backed Button-quail

FAMILY: *Phasianidae*
GENUS: *Turnix*
SPECIES: *castanota*
OTHER NAMES:None.

Description:

The name Chestnut-backed Button-quail is perhaps not entirely appropriate for this bird as it is less colourful and more uniformly cinnamon in colour than its close relatives the Buff-breasted and Painted Button-quails. Not strongly nomadic, the Chestnut-backed Button-quail tends to move locally in search of food supplies. Outside the breeding season this bird is often encountered in small parties of 5 to 20 individuals.

As is the case for other button-quail the female is considerably larger than the male. She is however, less distinctly coloured and patterned. Males have a pair of dark lines separated by a white line running along the length of the crown. The remainder of the upper surface (to the rump which is plain) is cinnamon brown with each feather bearing a black mark, white spots and cream edging. The wings are a pale grey which gives way to cinnamon on the inner flight feathers and shoulders. Wing coverts are finely spotted with white. The throat is white, tending to grey on the breast and flanks with coarse cream spots at the centre of each feather. The eye is bright yellow, the bill a creamy-grey and the legs and feet yellow.

Females resemble males, but are generally duller. The crown lacks the dark lines and the remaining upper parts are a plain cinnamon brown with fine white speckling on the mantle. The eye is orange.

Immatures resemble males but are more clearly marked and more coarsely spotted overall. The eye is a cream colour. Downy young are brown-rufous above with central and lateral cream stripes. The underparts are a pale cream.

Length: Male 160mm; Female 180mm

Subspecies:

None.

Status:

In the wild:sparse

In aviculture:uncommon

Threats:

Its terrestrial habits also predicate it to being vulnerable to predation by introduced predators such as cats and foxes.

Distribution:

Kimberleys and Arnhem Land.

Habitat:

Dry open woodland and on sandy or rocky ridges.

Diet:

Seeds of grasses, herbage and insects.

Breeding:

Corresponds to the onset of grasses seeding (Mainly in December to May) and insect abundance. The nest is a shallow scrape in the ground at the base of a grass tussock or shrub. Surrounding stems are often bent in such a way as to provide a dome or canopy which often has a side entrance. The nest is usually lined with fine grasses and leaves.

Sexual Maturity:

Courtship Display:

Is performed by the female and simply consists of a low moaning call uttered by the female within the nesting territory - usually at night.

Clutch:

4 to 5 glossy white eggs often finely speckled with light brown. (19x25mm). Incubation period: 14-15 days carried out entirely by the male.

Mutations and Hybrids:

None.