

# Little Button-quail

**FAMILY:** *Phasianidae*

**GENUS:** *Turnix*

**SPECIES:** *velox*

**OTHER NAMES:** Little Quail, Butterfly Quail, Swift-flying Quail, Dotterel Quail.

## **Description:**

The Little Button-quail has its stronghold centred in the arid zone. It is highly nomadic and often flies over long distances to find new sources of food. These forays take it far afield and consequently move over much of the continent.

Because of the uncertain nature of resource bases in the arid zone, the Little Button-quail's population tends to undergo boom and bust cycles. That is, its abundance reflects resource availability and hence is present in large numbers during favourable seasons and wanes to a small residual population during poor seasons.

This bird's name belies its size. It is similar in size and stature to the King Quail. It is not particularly social, occurring mainly singularly or in small groups of around five.

Females are the largest and most brightly coloured. They are easily distinguished from other button-quail in that they are mostly cinnamon in appearance. The crown is marked with two dusky lines separated by an off white line. Feathers on the upper surface are faintly barred with black and edged in cream. The wings are grey, the face and throat cream and the belly and undertail white. The bill is comparatively thickened and greyish in colour. The legs and feet are flesh coloured.

Males resemble females, but are generally more patterned and duller. In the breeding season males are distinct from females in that the female has a deeper cinnamon breast than the male.

Immatures resemble males but are more patterned overall. The breast is white with dusky streaks which change to barring at about 2 months of age.

Length: Male 130-140mm; Female 140-150mm

## **Subspecies:**

None.

## **Status:**

**In the wild:**

**In aviculture:** uncommon

## **Threats:**

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

## **Distribution:**

Throughout inland Australia occasionally reaching coastal areas.

## **Habitat:**

Arid and semi-arid grasslands.

## **Diet:**

Seeds of grasses and insects.

**Breeding:**

May occur at any time (except cold periods) and co-incides with the onset of grass seeding. The nest is a shallow depression located at the base of a grass tussock or shrub. Usually surrounding stems are bent in an arrangement which forms a dome over the nest. This dome often has a side entrance and is constructed by both sexes.

**Sexual Maturity:**

Has been reported to be attained in as little as three months.

**Courtship Display:**

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

**Clutch:**

3 to 5 glossy off-white eggs (18x23mm). Incubation period: 13-14 days carried out entirely by the male.

**Mutations and Hybrids:**

None.