

Painted Button-quail

FAMILY: *Phasianidae*

GENUS: *Turnix*

SPECIES: *varia*

OTHER NAMES: Painted Quail, Scrub Quail, Varied Quail, Butterfly Quail.

Description:

The Painted Button-quail is unlike many other quail in that it frequents open shrublands, woodlands and forests. It remains secretive however, shunning any open or grazed areas such as grasslands. It is entirely terrestrial and spends much of its time uncovering food items from leaf litter by scratching in typically circular patterns. Some individuals (particularly the young) are nomadic whereas others are sedentary.

The Painted Button-quail resembles the Stubble Quail in stature in that it is of a thinner build than many other quails. As is the case for other button-quails, the female of the species is the larger and more colourful. She is essentially grey-brown above with black mottling and white edgings to the feathers. She also has washes of rufous on the sides of the neck and mantle and distinct paired dark stripes separated with a whitish line on the crown. The face and throat are distinctively freckled white, and the breast and flanks are grey with coarse creamy spotting. The eye is bright red, the beak a light grey and the legs and feet pale yellow. Males resemble females but are less colourful overall, have coarser spotting and mottling and have distinctively less rufous colouring on the mantle and sides of the neck.

Immatures resemble males but have more clearly defined white and black markings on the back, lack any rufous colouration and have much larger spots on the breast. Downy young are dark grey-brown on the back and have central and lateral pairs of creamy coloured stripes.

Length: Male 170mm; Female 200mm

Subspecies:

None.

Status:

In the wild: moderately abundant

In aviculture: uncommon

Threats:

Threatening processes include the clearing of habitat for pasture and cropping. Its terrestrial habits also predicate it to being vulnerable to predation by introduced predators such as cats and foxes.

Distribution:

Coastal northern Australia. Occasionally found as far south as the south coast of NSW and central Victoria.

Also occurs from Philippines to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Habitat:

Damp rank grassland and dense herbfields.

Diet:

Greens (herbage) seeds of grasses and insects.

Breeding:

Occurs mainly from August to March. The nest is located on the ground at the base of a grass tussock or shrub and is a shallow scrape lined with grass and leaves. As is the case with other button-quail, the female of the species defends the territory and dominates courtship. Similarly, females mate with several males each season and subsequently leave them to incubate the eggs and rear the young.

In captivity Painted Button-quail will readily nest on the ground. As is the case for other quail, thick shrubbery or (preferably) tussock grasses will help to provide the shelter and security they require.

Sexual Maturity:

Courtship Display:

Clutch:

4 to 5 glossy eggs white finely speckled with brown (20x27mm). Incubation period: 14-15 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

None.