

FAMILIES OF UPLAND GAME BIRDS



RING-NECKED PHEASANT

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical Characteristics:** Males have an iridescent green, blue-green, or purple head with white markings. Body feathers are generally a blend of reddish brown, copper, and russet—scaled with black and white. A rooster can reach up to 36 inches long. A hen is typically a light, sandy brown with darker mottling (blotches of color). Hens grow to about 20 inches and weigh about one pound.
- **Range:** Currently, ring-necked pheasants range from southern Canada to northern Missouri and from the Chesapeake Bay to northern California.
- **Habitat:** They like grassy areas with tall weeds, grain fields, and woody cover.
- **Diet:** Their favorite food is corn gleaned from the fields, but they also enjoy a wide variety of weeds, seeds, and insects.



CHUKAR PARTRIDGE

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical characteristics:** Its body is a soft bluish gray, with black bars on the flanks. Its legs and bill are both bright red. Most noticeable, though, is the thick black band crossing its eyes and throat, giving the bird the appearance of wearing a mask and collar. This bird reaches between 13 and 15 inches long and can weigh more than one pound.
- **Range:** Chukars have been established in parts of eastern Washington, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada, Arizona, and Baja California.
- **Habitat:** They prefer steep, rocky slopes with sparse vegetation to more level places with heavy cover. The birds sometimes live in mixtures of grassland with scattered shrubs, or in the dry, woody country along streams.
- **Diet:** The chukar's diet is mostly seeds, especially those of annual weeds and grasses. However, it readily eats greens and insects when possible.



GRAY PARTRIDGE

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical characteristics:** It's a plump, quail-like bird that reaches about one foot in length and weighs roughly an ounce per inch. Its tail is short and squarish. Its most distinguishing characteristic is a dark horseshoe marking on its lower belly.
- **Range:** Their range extends east from Washington and Oregon, north into Canada, south into northern Nevada and Utah, and on into Wisconsin and Michigan.
- **Habitat:** They prefer fertile flatlands and rolling prairie—open terrain that still provides plenty of nesting and escape cover.
- **Diet:** grain from fields



BOBWHITE QUAIL

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical Characteristics:** They usually weigh less than a half pound each. The bobwhite's body plumage is mottled brown. They have a short, dark bill and a rounded tail. Males are easily distinguished from females by their white eye bands. In the female, these markings are buff-colored instead of white. The female's surrounding feathers are brown, thus showing less contrast.
- **Range:** Originally inhabitants of the eastern United States, these birds now spread across the country.
- **Habitat:** Bobwhites are found in a variety of habitats—from woodland to farmland and grassland to suburban parks.
- **Diet:** Their diet consists primarily of seeds, although they sometimes eat insects. This is especially true of the chicks. Other favorite foods include sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, and smartweed.



SCALED QUAIL

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical Characteristics:** The scaled quail is named for the scaled pattern on its breast and belly. The bluish gray feathers are edged in black, resulting in a scaled appearance. The “scale” feathers are paler. The back, wings, and tail are brownish gray or gray. The heads of both sexes are crowned with a cottony plume. This plume is whiter and higher on the male and smaller and more buff-colored on the female. This species is slightly larger than the bobwhite, growing to 10 to 12 inches and weighing 6 to 7 ounces.
- **Range:** The historical range of scaled quail is the Chihuahuan Desert of the southwestern United States and Mexico and its surrounding grasslands. Birds have been successfully introduced in appropriate environments elsewhere, most notably Washington and Nevada.
- **Habitat:** they live in arid grassland, scrub, and desert. They’re commonly found among spiny ground cover such as yucca, or in shady spots provided by juniper or mesquite.
- **Diet:** Their diet consists primarily of seeds such as mesquite, sumac, thistle, snakeweed, sorghum, and sunflowers. They’re well adapted to life in the desert and can get most of the moisture they need from insects and plant shoots.



CALIFORNIA QUAIL

PHASIANIDAE



- **Physical Characteristics:** This bird is attractively colored, with a black face and throat framed by a band of white. It has a bluish gray upper breast, cinnamon or grayish brown back, and a scaled pattern on its lower breast. It has a forehead plume that curves elegantly forward over its brow.
- **Range:** The valley quail's range extends all along the Pacific seaboard, from British Columbia to Baja, and east as far as Idaho, Utah, and Nevada. This bird has also been successfully introduced into Colorado and Hawaii.
- **Habitat:** Valley quail live mostly in the lower elevations of mountains, usually below 3000 feet. They're found in a wide variety of terrain, from brushy desert to vineyards to orchards—anywhere that provides the proper mix of food, water, and cover.
- **Diet:** The valley quail eats almost entirely vegetable matter. A few favorites are the seeds of lupine, filaree, mullein, sage, thistle, and trefoils. In the winter, their diet switches to the green leaves of forbs (herbs other than grass), grass, and clover.



GAMBEL'S QUAIL

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical Characteristics:** gray in color and with the distinctive, forward-curving topknot. Gambel's quails have no scaling on their breasts. Their bellies are yellowish with a black spot. Males have black faces outlined by two white bands, one above the eyes and another circling from the eyes down to the throat. Both sexes have a topknot, but the female's is smaller than the male's. They're gray or brownish gray overall, with white streaking on their sides. Gambel's quail are small birds, averaging about 10 inches long and weighing less than half a pound.
- **Range:** Gambel's quail are native to the hot, arid deserts of the American Southwest. They range in areas from western Texas to lower California. They occur in pockets of terrain extending up into small parts of southern Idaho, western Colorado, and Utah. They also inhabit parts of Baja California and northern Mexico. Small populations have even been introduced to Hawaii.
- **Habitat:** these birds are desert dwellers. They're often found in desert washes full of brushy cover, especially thickets of mesquite or cacti. Typically, they inhabit higher elevations than most other upland game birds. There rainfall increases the growth of mesquite, grasses, and chaparral.
- **Diet:** Their diet consists mostly of grass seeds and fruits. Mesquite, in particular, seems to be a favorite—both as a food source and a place of shelter. Lupine, clover, and mimosa offer other choices. Only rarely do they eat insects.



MOUNTAIN QUAIL

PHASIANIDAE

- **Physical Characteristics:** The mountain quail is the largest of the quail, sometimes reaching over one foot in length and weighing over one half of a pound. Its most distinguishing feature is its tall plume, which stands almost straight when the bird is resting but tends to sway backward during flight. Its throat is deep chestnut, bordered by a white band that reaches the corner of its eye. Its head and breast are gray, fading to olive-brown or brown over the wings, back, and tail. The hens' plumage is generally slightly more subdued. Occasionally, these birds are completely white.
- **Range:** mountain quail are found in the mountains skirting the Pacific coast, especially in the Pacific Northwest. But because they dwell in high elevations, they may be found as far south as Arizona and even Baja California.
- **Habitat:** They prefer forests and live above the chaparral brushland in summer. In winter, they move ahead of the snow, down into the oak and brush areas of the lower elevations.
- **Diet:** seeds, fruits, herbs, and flowers in the summer and some insects in winter and spring.

