

QUAIL...A VALUABLE ADDITION TO ANY AVIARY

3 THE PAINTED BUTTONQUAIL

Turnix varius



Female Painted Buttonquail
Kobble Creek, SE Queensland
Photo: "Aviceda"

The Painted Buttonquail, belongs to the family Turnicidae, the members of which resemble, but are unrelated to, the quails of Phasianidae. This species occurs in all States and Territories of mainland Australia, with the exception of the Northern Territory. It also occurs in Tasmania. A subspecies, the Abrolhos Painted Buttonquail, *Turnix varius scintillans*, is endemic to the Houtman Abrolhos islands off the Western Australia coast, where it inhabits five islands in the Wallabi Group.

The Painted Buttonquail is 19-20cm (7.5-8 inches) in length. The preferred habitat is grassy forests and woodlands, and the diet consists of insects and seeds.

Parental duties are undertaken by the male, who incubates the eggs for a fortnight and then cares for the young. Once the eggs are laid the female wanders off in search of another mate.

The more brightly coloured female has red eyes, her crown, face and breast are flecked with white. Her shoulders are chestnut, with thin white streaking above them. The male is similarly marked but slightly smaller and duller.



Map: "Nrg800"

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia

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In the following article the Painted Buttonquail is referred to as the "Painted Quail", the name by which it was most commonly known at the time.

PAINTED QUAIL

By Eric Baxter

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Another of the *Turnix* group, this species is found in all Australian States with the exception of the Northern Territory. Its habits are similar to those of the (Little) Button Quail. The hen does the courting which consists of lowering her head to the ground, puffing up her chest, making a loud booming call and at the same time moving around in a small circle. They select nest sites behind shelters, small bushes and in clumps of grass, and

both birds will build the nest. Their breeding season usually commences around September and they may go through to March. Normal clutches are usually four eggs, varying in colour from buff to off-white with spots of chestnut and slaty grey. As soon as the clutch has been laid the male commences sitting and the period of incubation is approximately fourteen days.

Again it is advisable to take away the hen as soon as the male commences incubation. Some chicks are inclined to go a little wild in a large aviary and to overcome this problem it is advisable to give them plenty of cover. Their feeding habits are much the same as the (Little) Button, and a diet of white ants, gents and mealworms supplemented with seeding grasses and the usual seed mixture supplied to finches will satisfy their needs. The young birds when about four weeks old can be transferred to another cage and the hen again returned to the male for further breeding. The variation in the sexes, as in all the *Turnix* group, is that the hen is the larger bird and the brighter, the head is grey flecked with white spots, a white band on the centre of the head, has a chestnut collar extending to the thighs, a grey coloured breast with white spots, the abdomen is white and the back is dark brown, each feather showing white, and the legs are yellow. The male is a dull edition of the hen.