

BEGINNERS BIT

STUBBLE QUAIL (*Coturnix pectoralis*)

By Josie Pyle

Summary Table

Habitat	Grasslands inc. pasture and stubble. Also low shrublands
Size	17.5 to 19.5cm. Females tend to be heavier.
Breeding Season	Variable. Mainly August to March.
Nest	Scrap lined with grass and sheltered by grass tussock or bush.
Eggs	4 – 14 pale cream to dull brown with dark brown spots.
Incubation Period	21-22 days. Female incubates alone. Both sexes care for chicks.

Distribution and Habitat

Stubble Quail inhabit open country and the better watered areas of southern Australia. Stubble Quail are highly nomadic – local numbers fluctuate wildly in response to climatic conditions, increasing in extended wet periods and reducing in drier times. Birds may cover long distances in search of favourable conditions. The distribution of the Stubble Quail has been increased by the clearing of woodlands and cultivation of crops. However, much of their inland habitat has been damaged or destroyed by rabbits so it is uncertain whether the overall number of birds has increased.

Description

Length: 17.5 to 19.5cm. Females tend to be heavier.

Male: The upperparts are a very dark brown with pale buff markings and cream stripes in the centre of each feather. The crown is black with small brown tips to the feathers. He has a white stripe above the eye, an orange-chestnut throat and a black patch in the centre of the chest. The rest of the breast is streaked brown and white and the abdomen is white. Eyes: red-brown. Bill: black. Legs: pale flesh colour.

Female: The throat is off white with pale buff on the sides of face and neck. She lacks the black chest patch and chestnut throat.

Voice

Stubble Quail utter a three-syllable clear whistle cuck-ee-whit or a two-syllable too-weep.

Avicultural Notes

The Stubble Quail is best kept in a planted aviary with plenty of ground cover. As with other quail, keeping only one pair per aviary with no other ground dwelling birds is essential. In a parrot flight aviary, cover can be supplied by cut branches of brush or bushes such as Melaleuca. Stubble Quail are not usually flighty but it is generally a good idea to clip one wing if moving a bird to a new aviary.

Feeding

Stubble Quail will live and breed on a commercial Finch or Budgie Mix. Better results may be obtained by adding Passwell™ Crumbles, live food and seeding grasses. In the wild breeding is timed around times of rain and therefore maximal insect numbers. A high protein diet such as an increased supply of live food at the start of the breeding season may stimulate breeding behaviour and is especially important in the first 10 days after chicks hatch. A good supply of green food is also important at these times.

Nesting

In the wild Stubble Quail nest in a scrape lined with grass and sheltered by grass tussock or bush. In the aviary they tend to prefer to nest in similar areas of cover. In this nest the female lays 4 – 14 pale cream to dull brown with dark brown spots, which she alone incubates for 21-22 days. The male will stay close to the nest and usually helps care for the chicks. Stubble Quail chicks grow rapidly and should be removed when independent to prevent aggression from the adults. Young cocks can be identified by orange feathers on the chin and black feathers in the centre chest features that usually develop by 12 - 16 weeks of age.

Summary

The Stubble Quail is a relatively cheap and attractive addition to an aviary, especially for those who want something different to the ubiquitous King

Quail. They are generally quiet birds that require little special attention and will breed freely given the right conditions