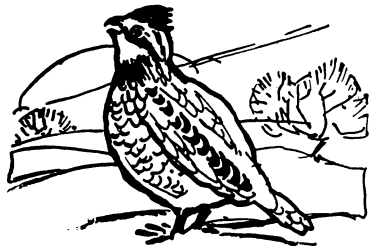


WILDLIFE
**NATURE
RAMBLINGS**



Quail

➤ MORE quail fall victim to chilled lead shot each autumn than any other game bird in North America. Hunted by man as well as by dogs, cats, foxes, skunks, weasels, snakes, great horned owls and sharp-eyed hawks, it is small wonder that the bobwhite has an exceedingly suspicious disposition. When the harvest moon is full over the shocked corn, this plump little field-dweller with the bombshell takeoff knows that the season of terror has returned.

Yet somehow the bobwhite will refuse again to be exterminated. The survival of American quail through the period of care-free market hunting into the present era of legal protection is one of the biological miracles of the Age of Gunpowder.

Not only in wild and out-of-the-way places does the quail still live, but all along the fence-rows of busy farms, even on the edges of cities. It is almost as if bobwhite knew how important he is to the insect-bedeveled farmers of the nation, and what a boon to humans who suffer from hayfever.

Bobwhites are so valuable as destroyers of weed seeds and insects that they deserve even more protection than they get. At one sitting a bird has been known to consume a thousand ragweed seeds. Another had eaten 5,000 seeds of foxtail grass, and a third fully 10,000 of the tiny seeds of the pigweed. And this is but the starch in the bobwhite diet; his meals contain so many injurious insects that he is worth many a quart of poison spray in a field.

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But man, being perverse, continues to reason in this fashion: In the summer, grasshoppers ate our grain. Bobwhites ate the grasshoppers. Now we eat the bobwhites.

Quail are ground-loving birds, and seldom venture very far by air. They have a strong nesting and breeding urge, and when allowed to stick to business, average 14 offspring each year. To keep these large families firmly in tow, they have a wide repertoire of calls, shifting from tenderness to belligerency according to their mood. By means of the familiar whistling "bob . . . white" they attract their mates. The ringing "scatter call" keeps the coveys from wandering too far. A sharp "toil-ick, ick, ick" sounds the alarm when danger is near.

In escaping an enemy, bobwhite relies more on camouflage and the cover of tangled brush than upon breaking for the wild blue yonder. He would rather run than fly. But when discovery is imminent, a covey will burst from cover with a great "whirrr" of their wings, scattering in all directions at 30 to 40 mile-an-hour speeds.

By the suddenness and noise of their take-off, they often startle the hunter and leave him waving the muzzle of his gun in hapless confusion. It is the bobwhite's last resort. Even he, the king of upland game birds, cannot outfly modern high-powered lead poisoning.

Science News Letter, October 28, 1950

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METEOROLOGY

Warm Weather Continues Over Most of Country

➤ THIS will continue to be an unusual fall. The extended forecast section of the Weather Bureau predicts that most of the country will have above normal temperatures until the middle of November.

The Pacific northwest, the northern Rocky Mountain states and the northern plains, as well as southern Florida, however, will be colder than normal. Southern Texas will have the warmest weather.

There is no prediction for any considerable area of the country of just plain normal temperatures.

Opposite corners of the country will experience above normal rain—and in some cases snow—during the next two weeks. Those are the Pacific northwest and the northern plains, and way across the country in southern Florida. There is a section of the country between those two, extending from the Southwest up through Texas and into the middle Atlantic states in which less than normal rains can be expected. The rest of the country is expected to get along on the usual amounts of rain.

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