

ORNITHOLOGY

Quail Eat Sunflower in Fall, Sorghum in Spring

➤ THE STUBBY-TAILED bobwhite quail, one of the favorite birds in the United States, prefers seeds of sorghum—in the early spring at least.

In the autumn, quail in Kansas eat sunflower seeds, reports Dr. Robert Robel of Kansas State University, Manhattan, who has been conducting a three-year research study on quail on the Fort Riley Reservation in cooperation with the U.S. Army's wildlife conservation officer.

Each month, except during the nesting and reproduction seasons in spring and summer, ten quail are collected and examined to see what they have been eating.

Sorghum filled about 24.3% of the contents in the birds' crops. Sunflower seed was next, making up about 17.5% of the contents, Dr. Robel said.

Ragweed, grasses, animal matter, sumac, corn and partridge pea made up the rest of the quail's menu.

The Army has directed each military post or reserve to help in conservation projects.

• Science News Letter, 85:63 Jan. 25, 1964

Nature Note

➤ WALKING UNDERWATER in an ice-cold foaming mountain stream may not be the preferred method of working up an appetite, but the extraordinary dipper or water ouzel takes keen delight in it.

Although nature has not equipped this bird with webbed feet for diving and wading like many water birds, the dipper swims on top of the water like a duck and walks submerged beneath the surface in search of his dinner—water beetles, dragonflies, caddis flies, other insects and small fish. His legs and feet are large and strong for gripping slippery rocks, and he winks conspicuously in his search for food, as the silvery white inner eyelid or nictating membrane wipes the fine spray of waterfalls from his eye. He has a denser plumage than most songbirds and can withstand temperatures up to 50 degrees below zero.

This slate-gray songbird who resembles a huge wren dips up and down even when he is standing still, flicks his tail vigorously and sings a bubbling, flutelike song that resounds even in the cold winter months. However, when danger approaches, the bubbling voice changes to a shrill zit, zit, zit.

When nesting, the bird is still loath to leave his aquatic habitat and often builds the nest behind a waterfall, under a stream-bank or a bridge. No other perching bird is so well adapted to life in the water.

Dippers all over the world comprise the family Cinclidae. The North American dipper, *Cinclus mexicanus*, is found west of the Black Hills of South Dakota between Alaska and Arizona, New Mexico and parts of Mexico. Other species are found in Europe, and northern Asia.

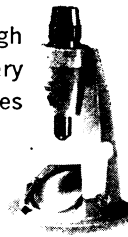
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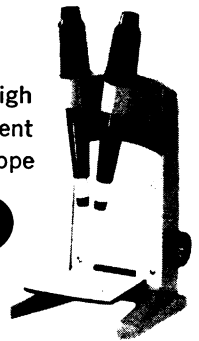
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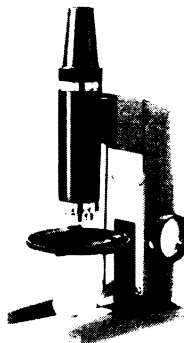
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