



UPLAND GAME BIRDS

Upland Game Birds

by
Richard E. McCabe

Federal Cartridge Company
900 Ehlen Drive
Anoka, MN 55303

SPECIES	PAGE
<i>Contents</i>	4
<i>Introduction</i>	5 -6
<i>Ring-necked Pheasant</i>	7
<i>Chucker</i>	8
<i>Hungarian Partridge</i>	9
<i>Ruffed Grouse</i>	10
<i>Spruce Grouse</i>	11
<i>Greater Prairie-chicken</i>	12
<i>Sharp-tailed Grouse</i>	13
<i>Greater Sage-grouse</i>	14
<i>Gunnison Sage-grouse</i>	15
<i>Blue Grouse</i>	16
<i>Willow Ptarmigan</i>	17
<i>Rock Ptarmigan</i>	18
<i>White-tailed Ptarmigan</i>	19
<i>Northern Bobwhite</i>	20
<i>Scaled Quail</i>	21
<i>California Quail</i>	22
<i>Gambel's Quail</i>	23
<i>Mountain Quail</i>	24
<i>Montezuma Quail</i>	25
<i>Mourning Dove</i>	26
<i>White-winged Dove</i>	27
<i>Band-tailed Pigeon</i>	28
<i>American Woodcock</i>	29
<i>Wild Turkey</i>	30
<i>Special upland game bird characteristics</i>	31

Cover photo: Ring-necked Pheasant
Tom J. Ulrich

Introduction

Long before the time of Columbus, Native Americans were very familiar with upland game birds. They modeled dramatic dances after some of the birds' colorful courtship displays. They mimicked the calls of some of the birds for their own communication purposes. They hunted most for food and some for decorative feathers. They venerated some in song, mythology, religious ceremonies and special namesake societies and clans.

When European and Asian explorers and settlers pressed into the North American interior, they were awed by the diversity, numbers, behaviors, sounds and edibility of upland game. The birds became important subsistence fare, a highly marketable commodity and, eventually, sources of recreation.

And they were nearly everywhere in North America, from arid deserts (scaled quail and white-winged doves), to Arctic tundra (willow and rock ptarmigan), to coniferous forest (spruce grouse), to boggy swamp-land (woodcock), to hardwood forest (wild turkey), to forest edge (ruffed grouse), to western sagebrush country (sage-grouse), to Great Plains grasslands (sharp-tailed grouse and prairie-chickens), to grassy pinelands (bobwhite quail), to alpine meadows (white-winged ptarmigan), and more. Most spectacular in number was the passenger pigeon, which occurred in migration flights of millions and millions.

With the influx of people from other continents, the pristine landscape of North America was changed. Forests were cut and burned, prairies tilled, wetlands drained and grasslands pastured with livestock. So, too, were

altered the habitats—the sources of food, water, shelter and space—of upland game birds. Consequently, their numbers changed as well. Many birds thrived as never before with early regrowth of vegetation following disturbance by fire, plow and axe. Some declined by the elimination of nesting cover and food. A few with highly specialized habitats became isolated. And several simply disappeared, including the passenger pigeon.

Other upland game birds were imported from Eurasia. This was risky business, but some—such as the ring-necked pheasant, Hungarian partridge and chukar—actually survived and became well-established in certain areas and habitats without negative impact on native wildlife.

Despite the proliferation of many upland game bird populations (namely, most prairie and woodland grouse, along with mourning doves and bobwhite quail) in the wake of settlement, unregulated killing in all seasons soon took a toll. Along with such declines of habitats and numbers of other wildlife came alarm among the new Americans about the increasing scarcity of wildlife generally.

Through the actions and initiatives of concerned sportsmen emerged the new discipline of wildlife science and management. That triggered harvest regulations, land-management practices more conducive to sustaining wildlife and, most importantly, a sense among citizens of the value of conservation. People discovered that conservation of wildlife, such as upland game birds, is a matter of conserving and wisely managing the varied habitats of those desirable species.

Today, human population growth, sprawl and desires are eliminating wildlife habitat at a torrid pace, mostly inadvertently and unwittingly. Some upland game birds species once abundant and secure, and despite the advances of scientific management and conservation ethics, now are in decline and perhaps in jeopardy of survival. Prairie-chicken and sage-grouse are examples. Habitat degradation and loss, not overhunting, are the causes.

Today, wildlife conservation means more than preserving wildlands and regulating human activity. It means accommodating a multitude of wildlife species by managing landscape features and conditions to meet the various species' habitat requirements. This is an increasingly complex task, but it is essential, because where the sights, sounds and antics of upland game birds are absent, North America is less magnificent.

* * * * *

Points to ponder:

First, the word "game" comes from the Greek work "gamos," meaning marriage or joining, such as a special kindred relationship. In modern context, it refers to animals worthy of pursuit by hunters. It does not mean or imply that the hunting of the animal is a game or something strictly for the amusement of the hunter.

Second, in the following species accounts, the birds' mating habits are

described as monogamous (a male breeds and remains with a female until the young are fledged), polygamous (a male or female may take more than one mate) and promiscuous (birds that come together merely to breed, then leave to mate with others).

Third, of the upland game birds featured in this booklet, only the Gunnison sage-grouse are not hunted at the present time, although some of the other species are hunted only in some jurisdictions. Besides the sage-grouse, the species currently of greatest concern to hunter-conservationists are the bobwhite quail, prairie-chicken and woodcock. To help conserve these and other upland species, contact your state or provincial wildlife agency for more information, or join a local or national wildlife conservation organization that puts its staff time and energy into actual conservation policies and/or on-the-ground programs.

Fourth, expert upland bird hunters agree that the biggest obstacles to harvest success are: not enough off-season clay target shooting; not knowing the quarry's habits; not keeping the head down on the gunstock when shooting; not being physically fit enough to handle the hunt rigors; not staying alert and reading the landscape for sign; not carrying the firearm properly at port arms; not hunting with a well-trained dog; and not using a shotgun that fits.

Ring-necked Pheasant
Phasianus colchicus



Tom J. Ulrich

The “ringneck” is one of the most widely distributed and popular game birds, because of its size, abundance, stealth, coloration, eruptive and cackling flush, powerful flight, and excellent taste. Also, it prefers to escape by running, so it makes great sport for hunting with dogs. Hens are not hunted except on game farms. Native to Asia, it is said to have been introduced initially into California in the 1850s, but first established in

number in the Willamette Valley of Oregon in the 1880s. It has been translocated into nearly all rural lands in the United States and southern Canada. It has established wild populations mainly in the corn and wheat belt states but not at all in the Southeast. Its foods include waste grains, weed seeds, acorns, insects, pine seeds, berries, and occasionally snails and mice. A polygamous breeder, ringnecks produce one brood per year, from nests of 10 to 12 eggs.



Chukar
Alectoris chukar



Tom J. Ulrich

A native of Eurasia, the chukar, or “rock partridge” was introduced to southwestern Canada and the western United States in the 1930s. It occurs mainly in flocks or coveys of as many as 40 birds, and is notorious for eluding or exhausting hunters by running in steep mountainous terrain. The chukar is best hunted with well-trained dogs, for both finding and retrieving. It has a characteristic Whittu alarm call that can give away its location. Its direct flight, with rapid wing beats,

is accompanied by a continuous kek kek kek kek chuKARR chuKARR call that inspired its common name. It, along with ring-necked pheasants and bobwhite quail, is one of the “big three” upland birds used by game farm operations. It eats small grains and seeds, and is attracted to watering ponds, tanks and guzzlers. Mainly monogamous, this ground nester produces one brood per year, from a nest of 10 to 20 eggs.



Hungarian Partridge
Perdix perdix



Alan G. Nelson

This native of Eurasia, also known as the gray partridge, the “hun” was first introduced (unsuccessfully) to Virginia in 1899, then successfully in Oregon’s Willamette Valley a year later and successfully to a number of other U.S. states and Canadian provinces by 1910. They particularly thrived on short and mixed-grass prairies, and now are found mainly on farmlands between the 40th and 52nd parallels. The hun occurs in family groups in summer and coveys

of 15-25 birds in winter. Although it prefers walking or running to flying, its flight usually begins with a loose covey flush, accompanied by a sharp Cut! Cut! Cut! vocalization, then rapid, whirring wing beats interrupted by gliding. This partridge consumes grasses, weeds, grain seeds and insects and, during summer in arid areas their water source is dew. A monogamous bird, the female hun produces a single brood per year, from a nest of 5 to 20 eggs.



Ruffed Grouse
Bonasa umbellus



Tom J. Ulrich

The ruffed grouse is a woodland edge dweller, found in early successional deciduous forest, mixed deciduous/coniferous forest, alder thickets, aspen stands and retired orchards. It is the celebrated drumming “pa’tridge” of New England, but not a true partridge. The drumming, which can be heard half a mile away, is done by rapid fanning of cupped wings by males on a log, and is primarily a mating or territorial display. The “ruff” is a fairly solitary bird, and its rapid twisting and dodging flight often

commences with a walking, Kwit! Kwit! vocalization. Pounding wing beats make the flush loud, exciting and occasionally unnerving. There are two morphs (feather colorations)—red and gray; gray is more common except in the Northwest and Appalachian region. Ruffed grouse eat insects, berries, nuts, seeds, leaves, leaf buds and small amphibians. It is a promiscuous breeder. The females produce one brood annually, from nests of 8 to 14 eggs.



Spruce Grouse
Dendragapus canadensis



Tom J. Ulrich

The spruce grouse, or black grouse, sometimes is called “fool’s hen” for its general fearlessness of people, which tends to reduce many of them to tasty camp meat. However, spruce grouse alarmed into flight are rapid fliers, with strong, stiff wing beats and short glides. A subspecies, the Franklin’s grouse, is found in the northern Rocky and Cascade mountains. It lacks the chestnut band that its cousin, the male spruce grouse, possesses. The male Franklin’s grouse

makes a “towel-snapping” sound with its wings when flying over its territory, to signal its claim. Spruce grouse are tree dwellers. They eat conifer buds and needles, weed and grass seeds, berries, fern fronds, mushrooms and insects. They are promiscuous breeders, solitary ground nesters, and females have one brood of 5 to 10 eggs per year. These birds usually are silent, but males sometimes make low hooting sounds and may cluck gutterally at intruders.



Greater Prairie-Chicken
Tympanuchus cupido



Tom J. Ulrich

Commonly seen on prairie grasslands of the United States and southern Canada during settlement in the 1800s and early 1900s, greater prairie-chicken numbers have been reduced greatly, due mainly to conversion of native prairie to farmland. In yesteryear, this bird, which forms large, sexually segregated flocks in late summer, was widely hunted for subsistence and market. Today, only a few states have huntable populations. Its cousins have fared worse. The Attwater's prairie-chicken of

southeastern Texas is close to extinction, and the heath hen of the Atlantic coast became extinct in 1932. The other "pinnated grouse" species — the lesser prairie-chicken — is federally listed as threatened. Famed for the male's courtship display on "booming grounds," the greater prairie-chicken subsists on a diet of insects, leaves, grain, rose hips, seeds and shoots. It is a promiscuous breeder. Females produce one brood per year, from ground nests of 7 to 17 eggs.



Sharp-Tailed Grouse
Tympanuchus phasianellus



Tom J. Ulrich

The “sharptail” is a prairie grouse which is often mistaken for a prairie chicken, with which it shares a portion of its range on the central and northern Great Plains. It differs most characteristically by its longer, pointed tail, lack of pinnate feathers on the neck, “v” feathers on the breast and reddish-violet (as opposed to reddish-orange) air sacs. These birds are typically found in flocks in cutover, burned-over and cropped areas and along the edges of young forests, all

with low grass, shrubs or stubble. Intensive agriculture and reforestation are encroaching on the species’ habitat. It is a moderately fast flier, with stiff wing beats and glides on somewhat drooping wings. The sharptail’s diet includes insects, rose hips, berries, grains, buds and leaves. Its breeding behavior is similar to that of the prairie chicken but neither as dramatic nor as noisy. Females produce a single brood, from nests of 5 to 17 eggs.



Greater Sage-Grouse
Centrocercus urophasianus



Tom J. Ulrich

The greater sage-grouse, or sage hen, is the largest of the North American grouse. Its populations have declined in recent decades due to overgrazing and clearing of sagebrush communities. Males have a spectacular, communal courting display in spring. They gather at daybreak on traditional “dancing grounds,” called leks. They strut, fan their “spiked” tail feathers, and rapidly inflate and deflate air sacs on their breasts, causing loud and resonant bubbling and popping sounds. Like

other grouse of open landscapes, sage-grouse prefer walking to flying. When they do fly, they flush quickly, exhibit rapid wing beats alternated with glides, but are somewhat slower than other grouse. Sagebrush shoots, blossoms and leaves account for more than 70 percent of the sage-grouse diet; evergreen leaves, buds, dandelions, clover and insects also are consumed. The greater sage-grouse is a promiscuous breeder, with females producing one brood per year, from nests of 6 to 9 eggs.



Gunnison Sage-Grouse
Centrocercus minimus



Lance Beeny

This sage-grouse subspecies was recognized officially in 2000. It was split from the greater sage-grouse by virtue of its distinct range (mainly in Gunnison Basin, Colorado, but also locally in Utah), vocalization (tuka-tuka-tuka versus kut kut kut for the greater), less social breeding display, smaller size and some genetic variation. Like the greater sage-grouse, the Gunnison sage-grouse is declining in number and range, because of livestock overgrazing and development

in the species' sagebrush habitat. This bird is rarely seen away from sagebrush, the stems and leaves of which are its major source of food; sagebrush also is its primary shelter, shade and nesting cover. It invariably opts to run from danger, but will go to wing when pursued closely or surprised. It flushes quickly and directly, with rapid wing beats. The Gunnison sage-grouse is a promiscuous breeder and produces one brood per year. Nests contain 5 to 9 eggs.



Blue Grouse
Dendragapus obscurus



Tom J. Ulrich

The blue or “sooty” or “dusky-blue” grouse summers in mixed deciduous forests in montane foothills, but moves upslope--males first--in autumn, to winter in conifers. Some are incautious at the approach of humans, but most “thunder” rapidly away in a twisting, turning flight from danger, featuring stiff wing beats and glides. They are a sporting game bird and among the best table fare birds. When courting, the adult males inflate their

colorful air sac and make a hooting or moaning call that can be heard several hundred yards away. At other times, its hooting in series—whoof-whoof-whoof—is a give-away to the bird’s location. They are mainly solitary, and feed along the edges of forest stands for conifer needles, tree buds, seeds, berries, insects and twigs. A promiscuous breeder and solitary nester, the blue grouse female produces a single brood per year, from a ground nest of 7 to 16 eggs.



Willow Ptarmigan
Lagopus lagopus



Tom J. Ulrich

Largest and most widely distributed of the three ptarmigan species, the willow ptarmigan has distinct seasonal movements, concentrating in dense willow thickets in fall and winter, and scattering in spring to establish nesting territories. *Lagopus* is a Latin word meaning rabbit-footed, and correlates with the fine, hair-like feathers on the feet of all three ptarmigan, enabling them to walk atop snow. Autumn flocks often are heard before they are seen, featuring a low cacophony of

deep, stuttering croaks, soft growls and the nasal cackle koBEK-koBEK-koBEK. Although capable of lengthy flights, they usually fly less than 150 yards, using rapid wing beats alternated with short glides. The willow ptarmigan is mostly a monogamous breeder, and the male stays with the nesting female, defending its territory. People and even grizzly bears have been attacked by a territorial male. Females produce one brood per year, from ground nests of 5 to 17 eggs.



Rock Ptarmigan
Lagopus mutus



Tom J. Ulrich

The mid-sized ptarmigan, the rock ptarmigan is exceptionally hardy, living year-round in northern mountain ranges of Canada, Alaska and Greenland. Its summer plumage is darker than that of the willow or white-tailed species. It typically flies, after a strong and fast takeoff, with a flurry of wing beats followed by a glide on cupped wings. It has been observed to fly directly into snow banks to sleep or avoid aerial predators. It also has been seen flying at

the unusual height of 800 feet above the ground. This bird makes low growls, a guttural croaking and a soft cuck, cuck cuck sound that becomes much louder when there is alarm. The rock ptarmigan feeds on insects, moss, seeds, grass and berries, but mainly the leaves, buds and twigs of dwarf willow and birch. It is a monogamous, colonial nester. Females produce one brood a year, from nests of 6 to 13 eggs.



White-Tailed Ptarmigan
Lagopus leucurus



Tom J. Ulrich

Slightly smaller than rock and willow ptarmigan, the white-tailed ptarmigan lives on alpine peaks and meadows and in subalpine tundra, mostly above the timberline. It is distinguished from the other two species by its white tail. It also is the only one of the three species to have nesting populations south of Canada. The white-tailed ptarmigan's limited exposure to mammalian predators tends to make it unafraid of humans, not unlike the spruce grouse. It molts three times

annually, with its plumage coloration ranging from solid white in winter to varying degrees of white and mottled browns providing excellent seasonal camouflage. The vocalizations of this highly social bird include soft, rapid clucks—pik-pik-pik-pik-pikEEA—hoots and hisses. It flushes with a roar of wings and is a fast flier on strong wing beats and short glides. A monogamous breeder, this ptarmigan has a single brood per year, from a nest of 3 to 9 eggs.



Northern Bobwhite
Colinus virginianus



Tom J. Ulrich

Clean crop farming and monocultural tree planting have contributed to the declines of bobwhite throughout its range. Nevertheless, it still is considered by many hunters to be the number one game bird in the eastern United States, because it holds well for pointing dogs and has explosive covey flushes, fast flight and delicate taste. This gregarious, non-migratory bird is found in grassy fields, and along the brushy edges of wood lots and pastures, particularly where cover

is diverse and recently disturbed. Its characteristic calls are a sharp, distinct bob WHITE and a softer aa-bob-WHITE. More than 85 percent of the bobwhite's diet is vegetable matter, especially the seeds of noxious weeds. It also eats grains, insects, and the leaves, stems and flowers of preferred plants. This bird typically is monogamous (some evidence of polygamy), and produces one brood per year, from ground nests of 14 to 16 eggs.



Scaled Quail
Callipepla squamata



Tom J. Ulrich

The scaled quail has several nicknames, including “cottontop” for its conspicuous white-edged crest. It also is called “blue quail” because of its bluish-gray breast and mantle feathers. And it has been dubbed “blue racer” because of its strong tendency to run from threats. When forced to fly, it rises and flies quickly, but only several hundred feet before landing and running again to gain distance and security cover. It is seen mainly at

twilight hours, remaining in shade during the hot and brightest times of day. Its diet includes more (about 30 percent) animal food (insects) than do any of the other quail species; about half of the vegetable matter is noxious weed seeds. It makes a number of soft clucking sounds, but its calls are a raucous QUEESH and loud pee-KO and chek-CHURR. A monogamous breeder, the scale quail produces one brood per year. Its nests contain 9 to 16 eggs.



California Quail
Callipepla californicus



Brian E. Small

This quail shares the topknot feature with the Gambel's quail, but is distinguished by its pale forehead and scaled underparts. The California (or valley) quail's original range was the southwestern United States, but it has been introduced successfully to other western states and British Columbia. Its preferred habitats are foothills and valleys with grasses, moist chaparral and scattered trees. Irrigated areas are very attractive to the quail, as are suburban lawns and golf courses.

Unlike other quail, the California quail roosts in trees and can be found in coveys of 100 or more. It eats mainly seeds and leaves, but some insects as well. It holds well for pointing dogs and is more inclined to fly than run when approached. It has a variety of calls, the most common of which are pu-pway-HU-pop and kee-ka-Oo. A polygamous breeder, the California quail produces one brood per year, from a nest of 12 to 16 eggs.



Gambel's Quail
Callipepla gambelii



Tom J. Ulrich

The Gambel's quail topknot is shaped like a comma. This bird is slightly smaller than the California quail, which it resembles and with which it occasionally interbreeds. The Gambel's quail occurs in semi-arid desert country, and is the most hunted game bird in Arizona and part of New Mexico, Nevada and California. Unlike its California cousin, Gambel's quail prefer to run rather than fly from approaching danger. Because they are highly gregarious and are found

in large coveys in autumn and winter, they are nearly impossible to approach undetected without one of their number giving the alarm. The primary calls are kwoit or the louder, harsher Yah-KAY-ja-ja. They have a powerful take-off, but are not particularly swift fliers. More than 90 percent of the food they eat is vegetable matter, most of which is seeds. They are monogamous breeders, raising one or two broods per year, from a nest of 9 to 14 eggs.



Mountain Quail
Oreortyx pictus



Brian E. Small

The mountain quail is largest, most distinctive and most reluctant to fly of the quail species. It has two long, straight head plumes and seven or eight white stripes along its rust-colored flanks. It usually is found in early regrowth clearings on brushy hills or mountainsides, and in family groups of less than 20. It is a very fast runner, moving at 10 to 12 miles per hour even on steep slopes and in thick cover. When it flies, it speeds away

on cupped wings for short distances. More than 95 percent of the mountain quail's diet is vegetable matter, including weed seeds, grasses, small nuts and waste grains. Its principal calls are a loud KWEE-ark, which can be heard more than half a mile away, and a soft and rapid ket-kut-ket-kut. This bird is monogamous, and pairs produce one brood per year. Its nests contain 6 to 15 eggs.



Montezuma Quail
Cyrtonyx montezumae



Brian E. Small

Perhaps best known as Mearn's or harlequin quail, this bird is found mainly in grassy openings of hilly or mountainous oak/juniper and oak/pine forests. Overgrazing has seriously reduced the bird's range in the U.S. Southwest. Short and stubby, with a clownish face, this quail typically occurs in pairs or family groups. Its coloration makes it well camouflaged. A relatively reluctant flier, it usually is flushed unexpectedly at close range. Its wings make a popping sound at

take-off, accompanied by a vocal chuk-chuk-chuk-chuk. It flies rapidly, with stiff wing beats alternating with short glides. It eats some insects, but mainly grass and weed seeds, juniper fruit, pine and oak nuts, leaves, and bulbs. Its call includes a melancholy whistle vwrrrrr, a piping Kwerp, a louder kwee Kweep, and a tremulous, descending peww, followed by up to nine notes. Monogamous, the Montezuma quail has one brood per year, from nests of 6 to 14 eggs.



Mourning Dove
Zenaida macroura



Tom J. Ulrich

The mourning dove—so named because of its mournful call (oo AAH woo cooah)—is the most abundant and widespread of native, North American game birds. More mourning doves are harvested annually (in excess of 30 million) than all other upland game birds combined. This dove (called “turtle dove” in some localities) can be found almost anywhere in close proximity to loafing trees, dusting areas on the ground, standing water with clear spots along

the bank, and where there are weed seeds or grains, which includes everywhere from shopping malls to suburbs to farms. They usually occur as pairs or in small groups of less than a dozen. Some migrate. They are very fast fliers, often darting or zig-zagging, and their wings produce a whistling sound. They are monogamous breeders, producing five or six broods per year in the South and fewer farther north, with 2 eggs per flimsy nest.



White-Winged Dove
Zenaida asiatica



Tom J. Ulrich

This dove, similar to the mourning dove, but larger and with distinctive white patches on the upper wings, occurs mainly in arid desert regions of Mexico, but can be found in portions of Florida, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California. Dependent on standing water, the “whitewing” may have to make extensive flights in early morning and near dusk to water sources during periods of drought. They tend to use the same flight paths despite repeated disturbance. They feed on almost 100 percent of

vegetable matter, including weed seeds, but particularly grain. Large flocks can do considerable damage to unharvested grain crops. A fast flier, the whitewing does not exhibit the erratic flight of mourning doves, unless shot at or chased. Its most frequent call is whhooo-whoo-whoo-whoooo, much like the barred owl’s hoot, but lower and softer. A monogamous breeder, it produces two or three broods per year, from aerial nests with 2 eggs.



Band-Tailed Pigeon
Columba fasciata



Brian E. Small

The band-tailed pigeon is the only native wild pigeon in the United States. It is found in the oak/conifer stands, where it occurs typically in small groups perched on open branches at treetop level. It also is observed at water holes, mineral licks and foraging on the ground. Characteristic of the “bandtail” is a wide, gray, terminal band across the tail and a conspicuous narrow white band on the nape of the neck. Social, but less gregarious than other pigeon

and dove species, this bird can be found in flocks of hundreds and occasionally thousands during winter. Its usual calls are repetitive hu-who, coo-coo or hoppa-hoo, with variations during mating season. The bandtail is a swift and direct flier. Its diet consists of berries, seeds, grains, insects, nuts, fruit and peas. It is a monogamous breeder, raising two or three broods per year, with tree nests containing 1 or 2 eggs.



American Woodcock
Scolopax minor



Tom J. Ulrich

This shorebird is found mainly in the eastern United States and eastern Canada. It winters in the Gulf states. Primarily nocturnal, woodcock frequent pastured bottomlands and swampy areas with limited understory, such as alder and poplar thickets, for feeding, and upland stands of aspen and birch for loafing. The male's courtship ritual involves nasal "peents" issued from a fairly open "singing ground," followed by a minute-long, twittering flight to 200 or 300 feet,

then a spiral down accompanied by a chirping call. The performance may be repeated for an hour or more. When flushed in open areas, "timberdoodles" usually skitter away low to the ground. Flushed from dense woodlots, they typically tower to treetops before leveling off. Its long bill with flexible tip is used to probe for earthworms and grubs; ants and insect larvae also are eaten. The polygamous woodcock produces a single brood annually, from a nest of 4 eggs.



Wild Turkey
Meleagris gallopavo



Tom J. Ulrich

There are five wild turkey subspecies in North America—Eastern, Merriam’s, Osceola or Florida, Rio Grande and Gould’s.

The continent’s largest native game bird, it was common in many areas during settlement periods, but was decimated by unregulated hunting and landscape alterations. It declined to fewer than 50,000 in just several states by the early 1900s. Through public and private conservation efforts, it presently exceeds 5 million in 49 states. Size, food habits, habitat and

behavior differ substantially among the subspecies, but all are wary, fast runners and fast fliers. They roost in trees, but otherwise are ground dwellers. Young turkeys mainly eat insects; adults consume mainly vegetable matter. Adult males are known for their gobble, which can be heard up to a mile, and for strutting courtship displays. Female vocalizations include yelps, cuts, purrs and clucks. It is a polygamous breeder, producing a single brood annually, from a nest of 8 to 20 eggs.



Special upland game bird characteristics

Species	Average Weight M / F	Wing Length*	Span*	Sexes Similar	Top Speed**	Migratory
Pheasant	3 lb / 2.2 lb	35	31	No	40r	No
Chukar	1.3 lb / 1.1 lb	14.5	17.5	Yes	40-45e	***
Hungarian Partridge	14 oz / 13 oz	12.5	16	No	45r	No
Northern Bobwhite	6.0 oz / 5.21 oz	9.5	14	No	45-45r	No
California Quail	6.5 oz / 6 oz	10.5	14.5	No	35-40r	No
Gambels Quail	6.0 oz / 5.2 oz	11	14.5	No	35-40r	No
Scaled Quail	6.2 oz / 5.5 oz	9	13	Yes	30-35e	No
Mountain Quail	8.2 oz / 7.0 oz	11	15.5	Yes	35-40r	No
Montezuma Quail	6.2 oz / 5.4 oz	8.5	13	No	45-50r	No
Spruce Grouse	1.2 lb / 15 oz	16	22	No	30r	Yes
Blue Grouse	2.3 lb / 1.8 lb	20	26	No	30e	***
Ruffed Grouse	1.3 lb / 1.1 lb	17	22	Yes	45r	No
Sharp-Tailed Grouse	1.9 lb / 1.7 lb	18	25	Yes	35-40r	No
Greater Sage-Grouse	6.3 lb / 3.3 lb	28	38	No	25e	No
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	4.6 lb / 2.4 lb	22	30	No	25e	No
Greater Prairie-Chicken	1.8 lb / 1.5 lb	16	26	Yes	30-35r	Some
White-Tailed Ptarmigan	13 oz / 12 oz	12.5	20	Yes	40r	No
Willow Ptarmigan	1.2 lb / 1 lb	15	23	No	40r	Some
Rock Ptarmigan	18 oz / 1.6 oz	14	22	No	40r	No
Wild Turkey	16.2 lb / 9.2 lb	46	55	No	50r	No
Mourning Dove	4.2 oz / 4 oz	12	18	Yes	60r	Some
White-Winged Dove	5.5 oz / 5 oz	11.5	19	Yes	55r	Yes
Band-Tailed Pigeon	12 oz / 11 oz	15	23	Yes	45-50r	Yes
American Woodcock	6 oz / 7 oz	10.5	18	Yes	35e	Yes

* In inches, for male.

** r=recorded; e=estimated; not wind-aided; rarely achieved.

*** Altitudinal movement.

