

BIRD NOTES

BROWN QUAIL BREEDING IN MID-NORTHERN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. Brown Quail *Coturnix australis* were observed by me on a number of occasions between November 1974 and February 1976 in sedges adjoining the River Broughton, 7 km E of Koolunga, (Pedler 1975, 1976). There were other scattered records of this species in the region during this period, i.e., Auburn (Pedler 1976), Tothill Ranges (Pedler 1975), and Willunga (Black 1975). There are old breeding records from areas as far north as Adelaide (Condon 1969).

On 2 December 1984 I saw a dark coloured, downy chick in sparse, 1 m high Bamboo Rush *Phragmites australis*, adjoining the Broughton River and only approximately 200 m from my previous sightings of Brown Quail. After moving several paces in the direction the chick had gone, I flushed an adult Brown Quail which flew only about 10 m. When I made squeaking sounds it returned immediately, making agitated clucking noises as it flew to within 2 m of me, then flushed again moments later and landed in dry grass 20 m away. The chick appeared similar in size to a three to six day old Stubble Quail *C. pectoralis*, although it was much darker. The adult bird appeared to be larger and darker than a Stubble Quail with very fine, general, dark barring and fine, pale streaks. On 4 December J.A. Pedler flushed an adult Brown Quail at the same place but there was no sign of any young.

It could be suggested that this breeding record of Brown Quail provides evidence of a small sedentary population persisting along the Broughton River. However, I consider that after an absence of over eight years despite continued observation, it is likely that the present record is part of a recent influx of the species into South Australia following favourable seasons in eastern Australia. The fact that breeding occurred reflects the

opportunistic nature of this species when it encounters suitable conditions. The season was apparently favourable for two other species of quail in the general area. Many Stubble Quail and Little Button-quail *Turnix velox*, with young of all ages, were present in nearby crops and pastures from October to December and many remained well into January 1985.

My suggestion is supported by the observation of 20 Brown Quail at Woolenook Bend, on the River Murray in May 1984 (J. Reid, this issue). Several far inland sightings by Badman (1979) and McGilp (1923) are further evidence that Brown Quail can appear far from their usual range following good seasons.

REFERENCES

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