

**BROWN QUAIL ON THE UPPER MURRAY.** A flock of up to 20 Brown Quail *Coturnix australis* was observed on 19 and 20 May 1984 at Woolenook Bend, River Murray, ca 10 km N of Renmark. The birds were seen along a one kilometre section of a minor channel on the flood plain. The brief description taken at the time is as follows:

“medium brown colour on ventral surface with fine transverse, darker barring; warmer brown colour on face; dark brown dorsum; very plump, rounded, large quail.”

Distant photographs of two birds were obtained. The birds were observed in areas of River Red gum and lignum that carried a dense layer of dead and dying ephemeral grasses and forbs. Rank undergrowth of this kind is ideally suited to the habitat requirements of Brown Quail (e.g. Frith, H.J. 1976 in *Complete Book of Australian Birds*. 1st Ed. Readers Digest Services: Sydney). The flush of ephemeral growth is presumed to have resulted from flooding associated with the exceptionally high level of the Murray River in the previous spring. Early

on the morning of 20 May 1984 a group of quail was feeding on fallen and trampled seeds of a species of *Alternanthera* (possibly *A. nodiflora*, Darrell Kraehenbuehl pers. comm.) which was seeding profusely along a track through the habitat described above.

Records of this species in South Australia are scarce, particularly in northern areas of the State (Pedler, L.P. 1986 *S. Aust. Orn.* this issue). Only one previous record from the River Murray has been traced — at Murray Bridge in 1950 (Condon, H.T. 1969. *A Handlist of the Birds of South Australia* 3rd Ed. S.A.O.A.: Adelaide). It is suspected that Brown Quail are more frequent visitors to the Murray River in this State (and especially the Upper Murray) than these two records would indicate, as favourable habitat could be expected to exist on the flood plain following all flooding events.

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