

Order Galliformes, Family Phasianidae,
Genus Coturnix.

Coturnix pectoralis.—Eastern Stubble Quail.

Description.—Male, head, neck, and back, reddish brown, streaked and lined with white and black, some of the feathers of the back are black with narrow irregular markings, a white line passing over the centre of the head, and one from the base of the bill over the eye and down the side of the neck; tail coverts darker, some feathers almost black; lores, sides of the face and throat rufous with a line of darker and mottled markings from base of bill to the neck, breast in some birds being almost black, and in some instances with outer webs white; feathers approaching the abdomen, white with a broad dash of black down the middle; feathers of the flanks, white bordered with black rufous on the outside, under-tail coverts and abdomen dull white lined with black, in some cases very faintly; under-wing coverts white; Iris yellowish brown; bill, slaty grey; inside mouth, flesh colour; feet and legs, pale flesh colour; nails, blackish brown. Measurements in the flesh—length, 205 m.m.; wing from body to tip, 154 m.m.; spread, 347 m.m.

Female.—Not so strongly marked, yet the mantle is much like the male for it has the strange pointed white markings down the centres of the feathers, and the black mark followed by rufous on the outside, the strong white line down the centre of the head and over the eye, and down the neck is also present in the female, but she generally lacks the rufous chin and throat which are dirty white, the long feathers of the flanks are mostly dull white, with faint markings of black and brown; the centre of the abdomen, dull white; length (in the flesh)—205 m.m.; wing from body to tip, 160 m.m.; spread 359 m.m. Occasionally the female assumes the male plumage.

Distribution.—New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia, with a sub-species in Western Australia

Habits.—Gregarious, moving from one district to another in great numbers, generally moving south in the spring to breed, they prefer the well grassed hill-sides or plains to timbered country, although they are often to be seen in the latter locality, they are also found in swampy country

when there is sufficient cover for them; when the food supply of a district is exhausted they move away to better one, and this is generally done at night. If protected this bird becomes very confiding and will frequent the garden near the house and rear it's young, killing much insect life amongst the plants.

Food.—Grass and other plant seeds, also much insect life, they destroy an immense quantity of noxious weed seeds.

Flight.—Strong and swift, rise very quickly from the ground, and making a loud whirring sound with the wings.

Call.—Shrill whistle of two notes which is very difficult to locate.

Nest.—Placed on the ground often in a depression amidst thick grass or under a tussock, in standing crops or the like, the nest is generally roughly formed of grass stems, rootlets, and the dry blades of grass.

Eggs.—Four to ten in number, vary much in colouration, some being lightly marked, while others have thick dark blotches, in other cases a deep dark zone is formed round the larger end.

