

Grey Francolin/ Grey Partridge

*Francolinus
Pondicerianus*

Order: Galliformes

Family: Phasianidae

Genus: Francolinus

Species:
Pondicerianus



STATUS

Resident/ Common

MORPHOLOGY

- About that of a half-grown village chicken (13").
- A plump, stub-tailed greyish-brown game bird with fine wavy black and buff vermiculations all over, and some chestnut in the tail. Sexes alike. Pairs or coveys, in dry scrub country and cultivation.

DISTRIBUTION

- Resident in the drier portions—mostly plains—throughout India up to about 1,500 ft. in the Himalayas, east to Bengal and south to (including) Ceylon. Westward, beyond our limits, to Persia. Three races concern us, differing in details of size and colouration, viz. :the palest Persia-Baluchistan *mecranensis*, the darker Sind. N. India *interpositus* and the darkest S. India- Ceylon *pondicerianus*.

HABITS

- The Grey Partridge inhabits dry, open grass-and-thorny-scrub country interspersed with cultivation, and avoids heavy forest and humid tracts. It is commonly found on the outskirts of villages.
- Except when paired off for breeding, the birds go about in coveys of 4 to 6, scratching the ground and cattle dung for food, and running about with a jaunty, upright carriage.
- On alarm the covey scuttles away swiftly, the birds finally taking surreptitious refuge in some thicket, and are loathe to fly unless hard pressed. .
- After a short flight the bird resettles on the ground but continues to run on immediately, so that on approaching a bush wherein one has apparently taken cover it is found to have vanished and will be decried running on swiftly a long way ahead.
- They roost at night up in thorny trees and bushes, and will often take shelter into these when harried in day-time.
- The birds are easily snared and netted by means of trained decoys and find a large and ready demand as food. Indiscriminate netting has caused a serious diminution of their numbers in many areas. Young birds are hand-reared and trained for fighting purposes.
- They become exceedingly tame, following their master about like a dog, calling to his order and coming long distances when summoned.

NESTING

- The season extends practically throughout the year, the favoured months varying according to locality. The nest is a simple grass-lined scrape in the ground in grassland, ploughed fields, standing crops or scrub jungle.
- The eggs- 4 to 8—are cream coloured or café-au-lait. Apparently only the hen incubates though both parents usually accompany the chicks.