

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Brown quail: pp 128-129.



BROWN QUAIL

Family Phasianidae

Species *Synoicus ypsilophorus*

Common names Brown Quail, Rat Quail

Status Introduced

Abundance Common in selected localities

Size 180 mm (cf sparrow 145mm, California Quail 250 mm)

Habitat Rough country which has plenty of vegetation such as manuka, broom, fern and gorse. It also likes areas which have natural roadside verges. It is not plentiful in areas of high fertility pastures.

New Zealand range Found in the North Island from North Auckland to the Coromandel Peninsula, Bay of Plenty, King Country, Poverty Bay, Gisborne and Hawkes Bay.

Discussion The Brown Quail is an Australian introduction. It is similar in appearance to the extinct New Zealand Quail (*Coturnix novaezealandiae*) and the Australian Stubble Quail (*C. pectoralis*), of which the New Zealand Quail is considered by

some authorities to be a race. Research as to the DNA of the birds on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island showed they were *Synoicus ypsilophorus*.

Description

Crown Dark brown with fine black spotting. **Upperparts** Brown mottled with black and chestnut. **Throat** Buff. **Underparts** Greyish-buff, with black horizontal barring. **Bill** Bluish-grey. **Legs and feet** Yellow.

Conspicuous feature

- Overall brown colouring is distinctive.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Has a small “rat like” appearance, hence its nick-name “rat quail”.
- When disturbed it scuttles away into roadside verges with head down.
- Often seen in family groups over the summer months.
- Flies with a fast whirr of wings.
- Lacks the top-knot feathers of the Californian Quail.

Call Long drawn out, rising “ker-wee ker-wee”, whistle.

Nest A hollow in grass. Up to 12 white, brown-blotched eggs are laid.

Where to find – North Island

Northland – Far North on the road to Cape Reinga. P 278.

Northland – Bay of Islands in the Peria district. P. 278.

North Auckland – Tiri Tiri Matangi Island on the mown tracks. P. 291.

Coromandel – North of Coromandel town.

Bay of Plenty – Pongakawa Valley near Lake Rotoiti and Lake Rotoehu. P. 323.

King Country – Mapara. P. 314.