

## AN OVERLOOKED RACE OF THE CALIFORNIA QUAIL

BY A. J. VAN ROSSEM

SINCE 1921, there has been in the Dickey collection a beautifully prepared series of California Quail from the desert side of the Sierra Nevada in central eastern California, collected by May Canfield and Laurence Huey. These are all in fresh, unabraded, fall plumage and represent without doubt the true color values of the species in the region involved. These specimens I would long ago have described as a very distinct race were it not for the description of the Lower California *achruster*a Peters, from the Cape Region.

In 1931, the late Donald Dickey reviewed the situation in company with the writer and insisted that the Inyo California Quail be named. For one reason or another I have delayed such action, but in the meantime have gathered pertinent data from the major collections in American institutions. Action at the present moment is stimulated by recent newspaper announcements that "thousands" of California Quail are being hatched from incubators and will be liberated in shot-out areas. We have here, then, a condition similar to that which is in effect in many parts of the eastern United States where the original stock of the Bob-white has been diluted by bastards of questionable origin,—bastards which not only obscure the characters of the original stock in a given area, but which are only questionably fitted to survive the vicissitudes of the new environment to which they are transported. It is to put on record the real characters of a certain geographic stock of the California Quail before its identity is lost in response to the demands of shotgun enthusiasts, that the following race is named:

***Lophortyx californica canfieldae*** subsp. nov.

*Type*.—Male of the year in complete, fresh, post-juvinal plumage, J-1779, Dickey collection; Lone Pine, Inyo County, California, October 15, 1921; collected by May Canfield.

*Subspecific characters*.—Coloration very similar to that of *Lophortyx californica achruster*a Peters of the Cape Region of Lower California and distinguishable only by the even paler and more purely bluish or grayish (less brownish) chest, paler and less brownish flanks and under tail-coverts, and smaller, less highly arched bill. Differs from the geographically nearest race, *Lophortyx californica californica* (Shaw and Nodder) of the coast region from Monterey southward, the interior valleys and the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada, much as does *achruster*a—namely, in much paler and more purely slaty or bluish (less brownish) coloration and much paler and more restricted (sometimes obsolete) chestnut belly-patch.

*Range*.—Owen's Valley in east-central California.

*Remarks*.—The series of nineteen specimens, which are the basis of the above diagnosis, were all collected at the type locality between October 12 and 25, 1921. To make sure that these specimens did not represent an

introduced stock and were native to the locality, I requested information from the California Fish and Game Commission relative to possible 'plantings.' Under the date of July 17, 1924, they wrote as follows: "A diligent search . . . has failed to reveal any record of the introduction of the Valley Quail in the Owen's Valley. . . . The maintenance of a breeding stock of quail in Inyo County is due largely to the efforts of this Division (Southern) in feeding the birds during the severe winter of 1916."

It may be emphasized that the present proposal is in no sense the diagnosis of an intermediate but is that of the pallid and most grayish extreme of coloration exhibited by the species. Of the subspecies *californica*, the palest specimens are from the interior valleys (the San Joaquin and Sacramento) but even the palest of these are more closely similar to typical (coastal) specimens than to the Owen's Valley race. The few individuals examined from the Mojave (Palmdale) and Colorado (Palm Springs) Deserts of southern California are *californica*—most probably 'spill-overs' from the coastal slope.

Eleven fresh fall specimens from Adel, Lake County, Oregon (Dickey collection) are apparently not distinguishable from *californica* of the interior valleys of California. These birds were taken only nine miles from the type locality of *Lophortyx californica orecta* Oberholser (Cleveland Mus. Sci. Publ., 4: 2, 1932) but exhibit comparative color characters just the reverse of those ascribed to that race. They are slightly paler and grayer than typical *californica* instead of "darker" with the back "much more olivaceous." As to size, a supposed character of *orecta*, eight of these Oregon males give wing measurements ranging from 108 to 117 mm., while twenty *californica* picked at random from many localities measure from 105 to 115 mm.

It is with pleasure that I name this race for Mrs. May Canfield who in past years has enriched the Dickey collections with several thousand birds and mammals and whose collecting judgment has resulted in several of her specimens being named as types.

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