

GALLIFORMES

(Gamebirds)

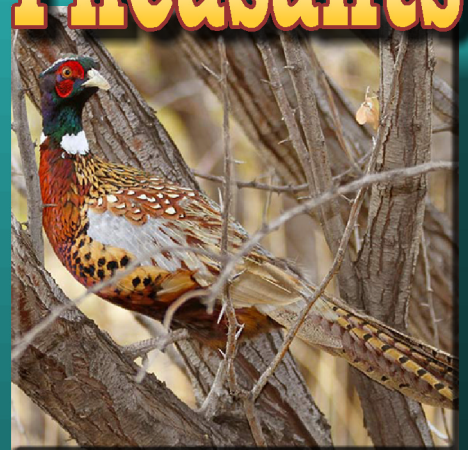
Quails



Turkeys



Pheasants



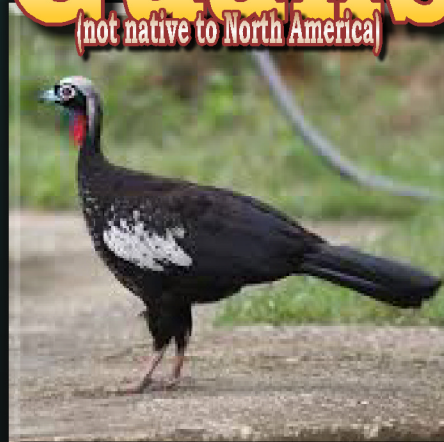
Bushturkeys

(not native to North America)



Guans

(not native to North America)



Guineafowl

(not native to North America)



Family ODONTOPHORIDAE (Quails)

Gambel's Quail (*Callipepla gambelii*)

male



Valley of Fire SP; NV

copper crown



Bear's Best GC; LV, NV

female



Valley of Fire SP; NV

Measurements:

Length: 10" Wing Span: 14"

Average Weight: 6.4 oz

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

plump bluish-gray body with brown wings, distinctive black top knot; (m) copper crown, black face and throat bordered by white, white stripe above eye, buff belly with black central patch; (f) gray crown and face, smaller top knot, lacks black belly patch

Notes:

common; thrives in desert regions of the sw US surrounding the Colorado Plateau Province from sw CA east to extreme w Tx and sw CO, and s UT south into nw Mexico; forages on ground for plant material and seeds; travel in coveys of 12 or more individuals

Mojave presence: year-round resident



Dolan Spring, AZ; NV

Comments:

When a potential threat approaches, the male (left) will climb to the top of shrubbery to attract the attention of the intruder, while mom and the kids (right) make good on their getaway.

Like roadrunners, quail prefer to run rather than fly to safety. Of course, that doesn't mean they don't know how! Plus, check out that awesome "chicken dance" routine below left. Anything to impress the ladies!

male



Bunkerville, NV



Valley of Fire SP; NV



Valley of Fire SP; NV

female



Bunkerville, NV



Red Rock NCA; LV, NV

Family PHASIANIDAE (Turkeys)

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)



Measurements:

Length: (m) 46" (f) 37" Wing Span: (m) 64" (f) 50"

Average Weight: (m) 16.2 lbs (f) 9.2 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

large, heavy bodied, dark brown overall; small head on long neck, long legs; tuft of feathers (beard) extending from chest; (m) multi-colored iridescence; naked head with blue skin and red wattles; fan-shaped tail tipped with white or buff; (f) duller overall with coppery sheen on rump and tail; lacks wattles; shorter beard if present

Notes:

relatively common; native to the US in forests, fields, etc., from Atlantic coast west through the Great Plains, also central Mexico (introduced in isolated patches elsewhere in the US, Europe, NZ, etc.); omnivorous, feeding on nuts, seeds, berries, leaves, insects, and occasionally small reptiles and amphibians; ancestor of the domestic turkey; six subspecies are known

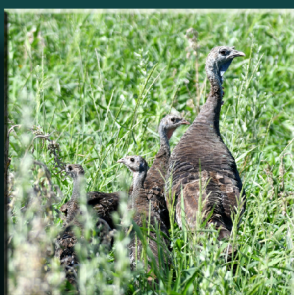
Mojave presence: rare (introduced in southern NV)



Overton WMA; Overton, NV

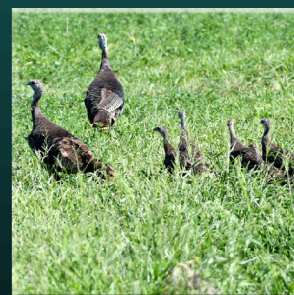


Overton WMA; Overton, NV



Comments:

The birds introduced to the Overton Wildlife Management Area in 1991 are the Rio Grande subspecies *Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*. There are only about 500 individuals in this habitat. Several adult females shared responsibility for protecting their young collectively.



The males, taking no parental responsibilities, were obviously up to no good somewhere else!



Family PHASIANIDAE (Partridges)

Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*)



Measurements:

Length: 14" Wing Span: 20"

Average Weight: 1.3 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

plump, medium-sized; gray to sandy brown overall with bold black bars on pale flanks; buff-colored face and throat bordered by black band that runs through the eyes; red bill; (m) spur on back of legs

Notes:

uncommon; introduced from Eurasia; found in the high-desert plains of w NA, including e CA, NV, UT, w OR, ID, w WA, and into BC, Canada; numerous subspecies native throughout Asia; omnivorous, foraging for leaves, seeds, and insects; generally very wary, so seldom seen; like quail, prefers to flee by running rather than taking flight; little sexual dimorphism except for male's leg spurs and female's smaller size

Mojave presence: rare; year-round resident

Comments:

As mentioned above, chukars are seldom seen in the wild due to their normally wary nature. However, the female above right gave me quite a surprise when she approached rather nonchalantly in the parking lot at Dante's View in Death Valley National Park in November of 2017. In my nearly 50 years in the Mojave region, she is the only member of her species that I have ever seen. Some things you just can't put a price tag on!



Dante's View; DVNP



Dante's View; DVNP

Family PHASIANIDAE (Partridges) Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV

Measurements:

Length: 84" Wing Span: 60"

Average Weight: 10 lbs

Distinguishing Field Characteristics:

(m, peacock) bright iridescent blue body; wire-like crest topped with a spatula of blue feathers; long, iridescent green train (tail); (f, peahen) duller, brown plumage, green lower neck; lacks train

Notes:

common in its native range (Indian subcontinent, Sri Lanka); prefers forests near water, but adaptable to urban areas; aka **Common Peafowl**, **Blue Peafowl**; diurnal; omnivorous diet, mainly seeds, fruit, and insects, but will also take small reptiles, amphibians, rodents, etc.; can live to 20 years

Mojave presence: rare, naturalized; year-round resident



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV

Comments:

Though native to tropical forests in India and neighboring countries, Indian Peafowl have been introduced to many other countries around the world, and have adapted well to varied habitats, including the Mojave Desert! Though not a desert bird, it can still be found in urban parklands hosting plenty of water and shade.



This fine, free-ranging fellow posed for photos at **Floyd Lamb State Park** in Las Vegas, Nevada, in February of 2021. He and his companions are the descendants of peafowl that were introduced and raised here, along with other animals, when the area that is now a state park was a working ranch dating to the early 1940s.

