

**California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Interagency Wildlife Task Group**

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MOUNTAIN QUAIL

*Oreortyx pictus*

Family: ODONTOPHORIDAE  
B141

Order: GALLIFORMES

Class: AVES

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**DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY**

Common to uncommon resident, found typically in most major montane habitats of the state. Found seasonally in open, brushy stands of conifer and deciduous forest and woodland, and chaparral.

**SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS**

**Feeding:** Eats green foliage, buds, acorns, flowers, fruits, and seeds of forbs, shrubs, and trees; also some arthropods. Gleans, scratches, plucks, grazes, and browses on around and in foliage.

**Cover:** Uses shrubs, brush stands, trees, particularly on steep slopes.

**Reproduction:** Nests on ground in herbage at base of tree, in rocks, or near shrub, log, or stump.

**Water:** Can meet water needs from food and dew in cool weather, but requires drinking water in dry weather. May gather at water sources in summer, and brood seldom found more than 0.8 km (0.5 mi) from water.

**Pattern:** Requires brushy vegetation interspersed with grass/forb areas; steep slopes and thickets for cover.

**SPECIES LIFE HISTORY**

**Activity Patterns:** Yearlong, diurnal activity.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** May migrate upslope and downslope up to 32 km (20 mi). Usually breeds at higher elevations, and moves downslope for winter, following snowline.

**Home Range:** In Idaho, home range averaged about 2.6 km<sup>2</sup> (1 mi<sup>2</sup>) (Ormiston 1966), in a sedentary population. Broods remained in draws near water, often remaining within 0.8 to 1.2 ha (2-3 ac) for several days. Few movements exceeded 0.8 km (0.5 mi) in summer.

**Territory:** An area not defended, but male aggression increases as pair forms in spring. In California, a breeding pair occupied 2-20 ha (5-50 ac) (Johnsgard 1973).

**Reproduction:** Breeds late March to late August; most nests active May through July. One clutch per yr of an average 10 eggs; range = 6-15. Female incubates about 25 days, while male remains nearby. Both tend precocial young; brood may remain together through winter.

Niche: Miller and Stebbins (1964) suggested coyotes, rattlesnakes, Cooper's hawks, and bobcats as predators, especially at water sources. Development of water sources in arid areas can increase habitat. Heavy grazing can destroy habitat.

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