

The Emu

Official Organ of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union

"Birds of a feather."

VOL. XXII.]

1ST JULY, 1922.

[PART 1.]

Buff-breasted Quail (*Turnix olivii*)

By A. J. CAMPBELL, C.M.B.O.U., F.A.O.U., Melbourne.

Near Cooktown (N.Q.) on 25/6/99, Mr. E. Olive, the well-known field naturalist, obtained a strange Quail, a female. The specimen was described as a new species by Mr. H. C. Robinson, was exhibited by the Hon. Walter Rothschild at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union, held in London, 21/2/1900, and subsequently figured in "Birds of Australia" (Mathews), vol. i., pl. 19.

Over twenty-one years afterwards (1/11/21) Mr. W. McLennan, collecting for Mr. H. L. White on the Cape York Peninsula, "bagged" a male Quail new to him, and a week or two later secured the female. The interesting "bag," which proved to be *Turnix olivii*, in due course reached Mr. White, who promptly and patriotically decided to figure the pair in *The Emu* for the benefit of R.A.O.U. members.

As usual in the genus *Turnix*, the female is considerably larger than the male. *T. olivii*, as Mr. Robertson has pointed out, is most nearly allied to *T. castanota*, Gould, but differs in its larger size, in having the head not conspicuously spotted with white, and in being without the whitish centres to the feathers of the dark olive-buff breast. The technical descriptions are as follow:—

Adult Male.—Forehead, lores and crown neutral grey, which color extends down nape; each side of crown and nape mottled black; ear-coverts mouse grey; hind-neck auburn; sides of neck feathers dull white, tipped black; mantle, scapulars and back auburn, some feathers with black bars and margined with white, or pale olive-grey; rump, upper tail-coverts and tail auburn; lesser wing-coverts grey mottled black; median and greater wing-coverts hazel feathers with irregular-sized marks of dull white on black line; primary-coverts black; secondaries and primaries chaetura black tipped and edged on outer web with dull white; chin, throat and malar region pale smoke grey; fore-neck and breast dark olive-buff faintly barred darker (deep olive); abdomen pallid neutral grey; under tail-coverts warm buff; tibia light neutral grey. "Bill brown, cutting-edge and lower mandible bluish white, irides and legs yellow" (W. McLennan).

Collector's measurement in flesh:—Length, 183 mm.; wing, 93; culmen, 15; tarsus, 22. (Plesiotype, "H. L. White Coll.," Nat. Mus., Melbourne.)

Adult Female.—Forehead and lores dusky neutral grey; crown deep neutral grey; sides of crown chestnut-brown mottled black; ear-coverts mouse grey; hind-neck auburn; sides of neck neutral grey; mantle and scapulars auburn, some feathers with black bars and edged with pale olive-grey; back, rump upper tail-coverts and tail auburn; lesser wing-coverts light mouse grey mottled black and brown; median and greater wing-coverts hazel, some feathers like mantle with several black bars and edged with pale olive-grey; primary-coverts, secondaries and primaries chaetura drab feathers tipped more or less with dull white, and primaries edged on outer web with pale smoke grey; chin and throat whitish or pale smoke grey; fore-neck and breast citrine-drab or greyish olive; abdomen pallid neutral grey; under tail-coverts warm buff; tibia neutral grey. "Bill pale dull olive, irides and legs yellow" (W. McLennan). Collector's measurements in flesh:—Length, 221 mm.; wing, 103; culmen, 17; tarsus, 30. (Plesiotype, "H. L. White Coll.," Nat. Mus., Melbourne.)

Description of Nest and Eggs of *Turnix olivii* (Robinson)

By H. L. WHITE, C.F.A.O.U., M.B.O.U., "Belltrees," Scone, N.S.W.

With the exception of the searches made by Sid. W. Jackson for the eggs of *Atrichornis rufescens* (Rufous Scrub-Bird) and F. L. Whitlock for those of *Eremiornis carteri* (Desert-Bird), I know of nothing so remarkable as the work put in by W. McLennan in his long hunt after the elusive *Turnix olivii* (Buff-breasted Quail).

His labour and perseverance were rewarded by three clutches of eggs of this previously practically unknown bird; one of the sets goes to Messrs. Bettington's "Terragong" Collection, while the others remain in my own.

The locality worked over is near Coen, at the base of the Cape York Peninsula, and about 180 miles north-west from Cooktown: a district not easy of access, but rich in bird life. In his very full daily notes, McLennan first mentions the bird on October 31st, 1921. He kept in touch with it up to April 5th, 1922.

Types.—Clutch, four eggs, roundish in shape, much compressed and pointed at one end, forming quite a dumpy pyriform shape, more so than any others of the Quail family that have come under my notice. Ground colour whitish, minutely speckled, spotted, and blotched all over with markings of reddish-brown, bluish-grey, and black, the last two colours being the most pre-



¹/₂
BUFF-BREADED QUAIL
(*Turnix olivii*)

Male

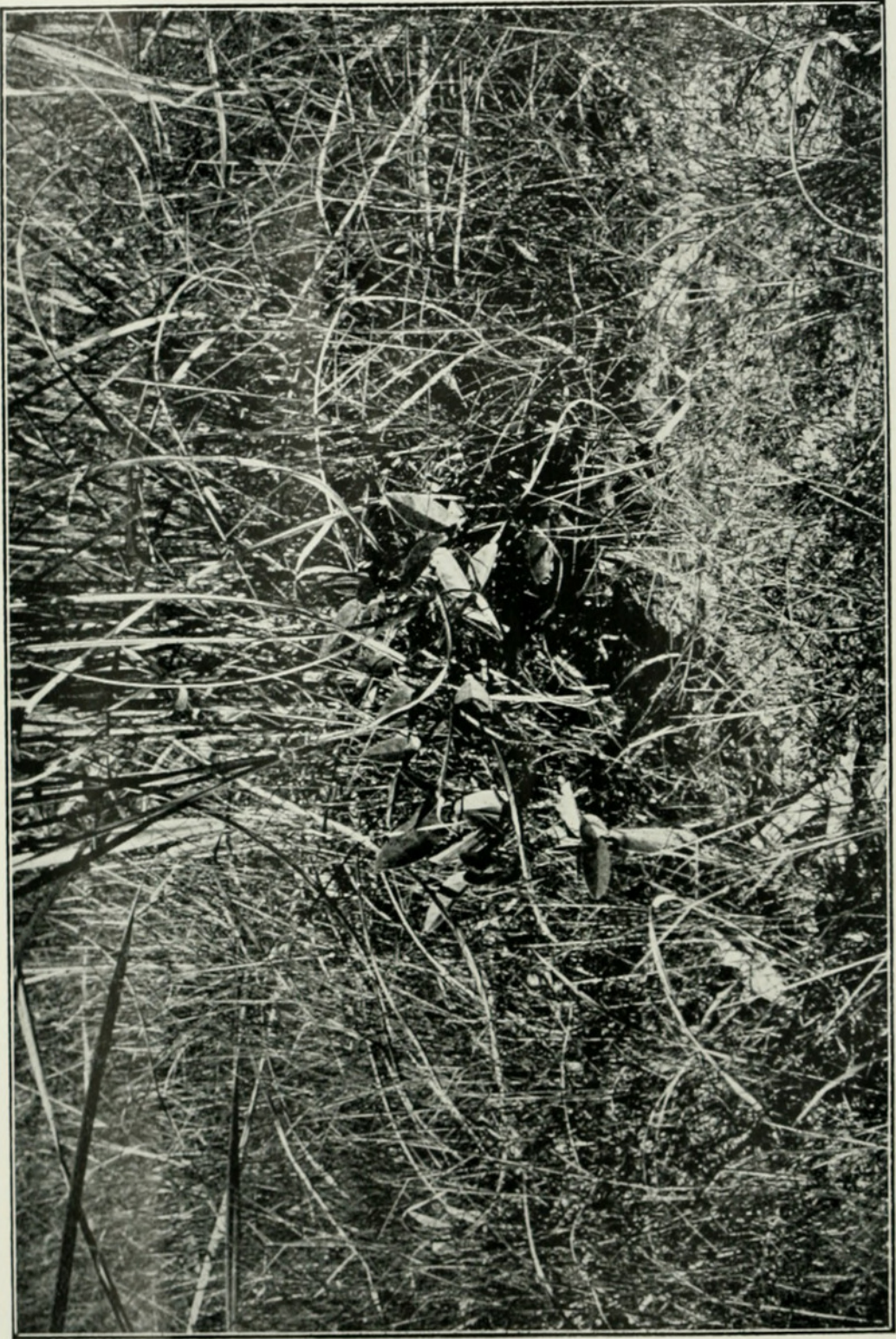
Female



Upper—Class of country frequented by the Buff-breasted Quail.

[Lower—A nest with eggs *in situ* Coen, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland.

Photos. by W. McLennan, R.A.O.U.



A.—Nest of Buff-breasted Quail (*Turnix olivii*), undisturbed.

Photo. by W. McLennan, R.A.O.U.



B.—Nest of Buff-breasted Quail (*Turnix olivii*) ; vegetation opened up to show eggs in nest.

Photo. by W. McLennan, R.A.O.U.



Campbell, Archibald James. 1922. "Buff-breasted Quail *Turnix olivii*." *The Emu : official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union* 22(1), 1-2.

<https://doi.org/10.1071/mu922001>.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1071/mu922001>

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