

Game Hunting in Victoria

2009 Stubble Quail season

Series No 12

The Stubble Quail is the only native quail species that can be legally hunted in Victoria. A number of introduced game birds (eg. pheasants, partridges) may also be hunted, however, most of these introduced game birds are only found on licensed game bird farms.

The Stubble Quail is the most common quail species occurring in Australia and is found in Queensland and much of south-eastern and south-western Australia, across a range of habitat types.

Stubble Quail prefer areas of tall, dense ground vegetation, particularly grasslands, natural or improved, as well as areas of other low cover including cereal crops, stubble and leafy crops.

Generally, quail hunting occurs on private property in stubble paddocks and grasslands, however, 16 State Game Reserves are open to Stubble Quail hunting (see below for details).

Season dates

The 2009 Stubble Quail season opens on 4 April and concludes on 30 June 2009.

Bag limit

The bag limit is a maximum of 20 birds per day.

Hunting method

Stubble Quail may be hunted with a shotgun only, not exceeding a 12 gauge.

Opening times

The hunting of Stubble Quail is only permitted from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset during the prescribed hunting season.

The use of gun dogs for hunting Stubble Quail

The use of a trained gun dog has the potential to increase hunter success while enabling the hunter to participate in and appreciate an age-old tradition.

Gun dogs can be particularly useful when hunting quail in long grass and to locate downed birds, which may otherwise be lost.

Generally, quail become more difficult to find as the season progresses and the use of a gun dog has the potential to increase hunter success by accurately locating quail and retrieving downed birds.

For further information on the use of gun dogs used to hunt Stubble Quail, please visit the DSE website at: www.dse.vic.gov.au

Stubble Quail hunting on State Game Reserves

Stubble Quail may also be hunted on the following 16 State Game Reserves:

TITLE OF RESERVE	LOCALITY*
Mansfield Swamp	10 km west of Stanhope
Gaynor Swamp	10 km north of Colbinabbin
Wallenjoie Swamp	10 km north of Colbinabbin
Rowan Swamp	15 km south-west of Yarrawonga
Jack Smith Lake	30 km east of Yarram
Lake Coleman	20 km east of Sale
Jones Bay	5 km south of Bairnsdale
Macleod Morass	Near Bairnsdale
Clydebank Morass	12 km north-east of Sale
Dowd Morass	10 km south-east of Sale
Blond Bay	20 km south of Bairnsdale
Lake Connearre	South-east of Geelong
Heart Morass	5 km east of Sale
Hateleys Lake	10 km west of Natimuk
Bow Lake	40 km east of Edenhope
Darlot Swamp	10 km north-east of Horsham

For a map of these reserves, please visit the DSE website at www.dse.vic.gov.au



Photo: Scott Lawrence

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Non-Game Quail And The Plains-wanderer

All native quail species are protected in Victoria and, with the exception of the Stubble Quail, may not be hunted. In addition, the Plains-wanderer, a separate species that sometimes resembles a quail, also occurs in Victoria and is fully protected.

Plains-wanderer

The Plains-wanderer is a small ground-dwelling bird found in north-western and central Victoria, especially around Mitiama. The species was formerly much more abundant and widespread, however, changes to agricultural and pastoral practices have eliminated the bird from many areas, reducing its range.

In Victoria, the Plains-wanderer is classified as "Vulnerable" which means that, should factors causing their decline continue, it could move into the "Endangered" category and face extinction. It is a plump, tailless bird with brown plumage, straw-yellow legs and is sometimes mistaken for a quail. The Plains-wanderer inhabits sparse native grasslands, old stubble and grazed pasture.

Plains-wanderer are fully protected in Victoria and must not be shot. Very occasionally, Plains-wanderers are shot by hunters as they superficially resemble quail and often share the same habitat. Although hunting is not regarded as a major threatening process, hunters should be aware that Plains-wanderers may be present in their hunting area.

How to recognise the Plains-wanderer

The Stubble Quail and Plains-wanderer show distinctively different flight characteristics which can be used to distinguish birds in the field. Stubble Quail flush with a loud whirring of wings at a shallow angle to the ground, fly straight, far and fast, just above cover, twisting slightly then dropping tail-down into cover. The Plains-wanderer has a laboured; fluttering flight and often its long, yellow legs can be seen trailing behind, in much the same fashion as a coot.

Non-Game Quail

When hunting, you may encounter several other quail species that could be mistaken for the Stubble Quail. Those most commonly encountered include: Brown Quail; King Quail; Painted Button Quail; and Little Button Quail. These birds are protected all year and may not be hunted.

Distinguishing between Stubble Quail and non-game quail

It is important that hunters can readily distinguish between Stubble Quail and protected quail species while hunting. You should pay particular attention to: the size and flight characteristics of the bird; the habitat that you are hunting in; and the social organisation of the birds.

Below is a general description that can be used by hunters as a guide to recognising the differences between the Stubble Quail and non-game quail species. Remember, if you are not sure, **DON'T SHOOT.**

Stubble Quail	Non-game quail
Large, plump bird (compared to other native quail species).	Generally smaller than Stubble Quail (except Brown Quail which is slightly larger).
Bold, pale streaks on shoulder, back and breast.	Uniformly darker wings (King, Brown, Little Button).
Prefer open grasslands (improved and natural), cereal crops, stubble, lucerne and often found along weedy margins of irrigation channels. Avoid woodlands or areas with many trees.	Found across a range of habitat types including: woodlands; rank, dense grasslands; swampy coastal heaths; bracken; scrublands; grassy forests.
Mostly found singly or in pairs and, occasionally small groups.	Often found in small groups or coveys (Brown Quail may be found in groups of up to thirty birds).
Never vocalise (call) when flushed.	Often chirp or chatter when flushed.
Loud whirring of wings when flushed. Fly with fast wing beats and may travel as far as 500 metres.	Quieter wing beats, not as rapid. Often fly only a short distance.
Never glide when flying. Curved flight before dropping tail-down into cover.	Glide in flight (Brown, King) may drop head-first into cover (Brown).

ISBN 1 74152 103 3

Published by the Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment
Melbourne, March 2009 © The State of Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment 2008. Last reviewed March 2009.

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