

SHORT NOTE

Australian Brown Quail in Tongariro National Park

While assisting Dr Ian Atkinson (Botany Division, DSIR) on a vegetation survey of Tongariro National Park in the summer periods 1962-3 and 1963-4, I covered on foot most of the non-forested country on the slopes of Mounts Tongariro and Ngauruhoe but recorded Brown Quail only once.

On 14 January 1964 we flushed an Australian Brown Quail (*Synoicus ypsilophorus*) from its nest (Fig. 1). The nine eggs, which I photographed but did not measure, were white with mid-brown speckles. This nest was approximately at grid ref. 3065 3835 (NZMS 1, Map N 112), altitude 1000 m, on the lower north-west slopes of the volcanic cinder cone, Pukeonake. The vegetation of the locality was mapped as being red-tussock land (*Chionochloa rubra*) (Atkinson 1982), but it contained also scattered mosses, and herbs and low shrubs such as *Celmisia gracilentia*, *Stackhousia minima* and *Coprosma cheesemani*.

I thought no more of this record until I read the account of the OSNZ 1982 summer field study based at Erua (Innes *et al.* 1982). Brown Quail were not seen during that study, and J. G. Innes (pers. comm.) knows of no records from Tongariro National Park and its environs. T. A. Caithness (pers. comm.), while studying California Quail (*Lophortyx californica*) from a base at Turangi in the late 1950s, did not see Brown Quail in the district.

In Bull *et al.* (1985), the nearest record of Brown Quail to Tongariro National Park is from the 10 000 yard map square 32/40 at Tokaanu. The most recent record from that square was on 2 February 1979 by C. A. and M. A. Fleming, on the shore of Lake Taupo at the Tokaanu wharf. There are OSNZ records of Brown Quail from several other 10 000 yard squares to the north and west of Tokaanu.

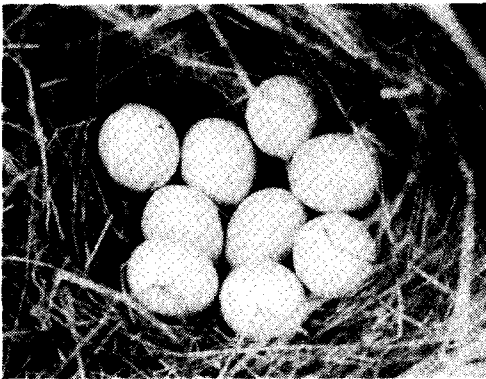


FIGURE 1 — Nest of Brown Quail, Tongariro National Park

LITERATURE CITED

- ATKINSON, I. A. E. 1982. Vegetation Map of Tongariro National Park. DSIR, Wellington. 27 pp. + map.
BULL, P. C.; GAZE, P. D.; ROBERTSON, C. J. R. 1985. The Atlas of Bird Distribution in New Zealand. OSNZ, Wellington. 296 pp.
INNES, J. G.; HEATHER, B. D.; DAVIES, L. J. 1982. Bird distribution in Tongariro National Park and environs - January 1982. Notornis 29: 93-99.

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