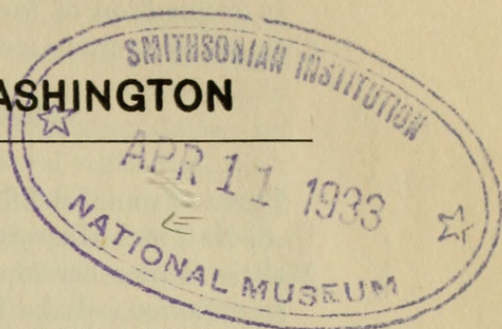


PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

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A NEW SUBSPECIES OF *COLINUS NIGROGULARIS*  
(GOULD).

BY E. W. NELSON.

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In 1923 Mr. Howard E. Coffin, cooperating with the Biological Survey, generously financed a project to introduce ocellated turkeys (*Agriocharis ocellata*) and other tropical American game birds, and to experiment in acclimatizing and domesticating them at his winter home on Sapaloe Island, Georgia. For the purpose of capturing the live birds required, Harry Malleis, a young naturalist, was sent to the Lake Peten district, Guatemala, where he spent several seasons. The work in the field was much facilitated by the friendly assistance of Mr. P. W. Shufeldt, who was then conducting extensive chicle gum gathering operations in that area.

From time to time, as occasion offered, Malleis collected study specimens of birds and mammals for the Biological Survey. Among the birds is a series of quail which proves to represent a previously undescribed subspecies of *Colinus nigrogularis*.

The discovery of a representative of the genus *Colinus* at Lake Peten was a source of much surprise to me, in view of the fact that several ornithologists have collected birds there in the past without recording it; notably Morelet in 1847, Leyland in 1857, and Salvin in 1861. It is well known that the general habits of birds of this genus, through their loud call notes and their liking for old fields and other open areas, where they go in bevies, render them among the most conspicuous species in any locality they inhabit. For this reason the failure of the earlier naturalists to note the species about Lake Peten gives rise to some doubt concerning its presence there in those days. It is possible that this quail is a comparatively recent arrival from the open pine forested areas of British Honduras where it has been found by several naturalists, including P. W. Shufeldt and Leyland, who missed it at Lake Peten. This is a matter worth investigation by the next ornithologist visiting the Peten area.



In recognition of Mr. Coffin's interest in the Lake Peten expedition it gives me pleasure to name this handsome little game bird in his honor.

***Colinus nigrogularis coffini*, subsp. nov.**

LAKE PETEN QUAIL.

*Type*.—From La Libertad, Peten, Guatemala. No. 302329, ♂ adult, U. S. National Museum (Biological Survey collection), collected by Harry Malleis, September 10, 1923.

*Distribution*.—Lake Peten district, Guatemala, and open pine forested parts of British Honduras.

*General characters*.—Both males and females smaller and darker, more brownish in general color, than typical *nigrogularis* from Yucatan. *Male*: Middle of crown more blackish; white on forehead and sides of crown more reduced and duller; white of feathers of underparts, their black borders, black of throat patch and black superciliary line duller; all rufous coloring on upper and underparts darker. *Female*: Above more dusky brownish; breast and sides of body darker.

*Description of male (type)*.—Middle of crown dull blackish obscurely streaked by narrow dull grayish-buffy borders of feathers, these borders broadening posteriorly, becoming dominant color bordering crown back of orbits and on nape, thence changing on back and sides of neck to white median lines and rufous chestnut borders on feathers; upper back mainly rufous chestnut, the feathers with slightly paler median lines, and narrowly edged with finely mixed black and buffy grayish; white area on forehead much narrower than in typical *nigrogularis*, represented by sparse number of white tips and narrow shaft lines on feathers, broadening posteriorly on each side as narrow white stripes bordering crown to orbits; chin and throat dull black, a narrow line of same extending around base of upper mandible, and including lores and orbits extending back as superciliary stripe; black of superciliary stripe separated from throat patch by white stripe beginning as a narrow wedge-point under lores and broadening posteriorly to form a roughly defined band about posterior border of throat patch; middle of back, rump, and tertiaries generally dull grayish brown, the general effect produced by large subterminal dull black sub-rectangular spots on feathers otherwise irregularly marked with dark brown, dull buffy, and dingy gray; inner web of tertiaries bordered by dull white, narrower than in *nigrogularis*; upper tail coverts similar to rump but with strong median black lines; tail feathers mouse gray, variegated on upper side of middle feathers and outer webs of others with obscure dingy grayish vermiculations; primaries and secondaries hair brown, outer webs of secondaries narrowly bordered and marked with dull buffy; wing coverts mainly Sanford brown, distinctly paler than rufous chestnut on neck and upper back, narrowly edged with buffy gray variegated by obscure blackish shaft lines and subterminal borders; lower neck, breast, and sides of body with coarsely scaled effect due to the dull white feathers sharply bordered with dull black, very narrow near white band bordering black throat patch and becoming broad and strongly contrasted posteriorly; black borders of feathers on sides with more or less strongly marked inner border of rusty rufous, sometimes mixed



with blackish; rufous chestnut replacing black border on some feathers; abdomen, thighs, and under tail coverts rather dark dull rusty cinnamon variegated with buffy grayish and blackish, with subterminal black spots.

*Female (topotype).*—Middle of crown dull blackish, becoming darker on nape; feathers on top and sides of head and neck bordered with cinnamon, narrow on crown, broader and paler on neck where contrasting strongly with black centers; chin, throat, and superciliary stripe deep ochraceous tawny as in typical *nigrogularis*; fine narrow black line extending back below eye to dull russet brown ear coverts; entire back, including wing coverts and tertiaries verona brown, irregularly and obscurely marked with dull brownish black and dull buffy whitish spots; extensive black spots on tertiaries bordered on inner side with pale buffy whitish; middle of feathers on lower back blackish centrally with brown borders; upper tail coverts with well marked median blackish lines, broadly bordered with brown irregularly barred and maculated with dull buffy white; tail above light slaty brown, finely edged and vermiculated on upper surface with dull grayish and dull buffy whitish; underparts of neck and breast dusky brown spotted with white; feathers of this area blackish brown with black tip, a subterminal bar of pale ochraceous succeeded by a rounded white spot on each web; posteriorly, on sides of body, feathers have shaft lines of dark ochraceous with large black and whitish markings on webs producing a paler, more coarsely blotched effect than on breast; abdomen and thighs pale dingy ochraceous, feathers indistinctly and irregularly barred with dusky; under tail coverts deep rich rufous with small median wedge-shaped black spots at tips and pale ochraceous or whitish spots on ends of both webs.

*Measurements of ♂ (type).*—Wing, 95 mm.; tail, 48; culmen, 13; tarsus, 29.

*Specimens examined.*—Total number 19, as follows:

Guatemala: La Libertad, Peten (type locality), 16 (9 partly grown young); Pacoman, Peten, 1.

British Honduras: Near City of Belize, 1; Pine Ridge, 1.

*Remarks.*—For many years *Colinus nigrogularis segoviensis* of Ridgway was treated as a synonym of typical *Colinus nigrogularis* Gould. A comparison of the two adult males that were the basis for Ridgway's description with a considerable series of typical *nigrogularis* from the arid parts of the Peninsula of Yucatan shows them to represent a strongly marked subspecies. The Yucatan bird has the clearer and paler colors indicative of the hot arid conditions prevailing so much of the time in its habitat, while *segoviensis* has the darker, richer coloring to be expected of a form living in a much more humid climate.

The two original specimens of *segoviensis* were collected by Dr. C. H. Townsend more than twenty-five miles above the mouth of the Segovia River in the open, grassy pine forest through which the river flows. *Colinus nigrogularis coffini* from British Honduras and the Peten District of Guatemala is much more like *segoviensis* in its dark coloration, although geographically it is much nearer the home of the pale colored typical *nigrogularis*.

All of these forms belong in the tropical lowlands of the Atlantic drainage, perhaps never ranging more than 1,000 feet above sea level.





Nelson, Edward William. 1932. "A new subspecies of *Colinus nigrogularis* (Gould)." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 45, 169–171.

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