

Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*)

Description: The only native quail in the east. Contrasting pale eyebrow and throat, buff on female, white on male. Reddish-brown body, very short tail. Heard more often than seen – call is an emphatic, whistled “bob-white”.

Trend: Steep Decline

Habitat: Found in a wide variety of semi-open habitats, including brushy meadows, overgrown fields, or where pastures or agricultural fields are next to hedgerows or woodlots. They seem to avoid mature woodlands, inhabiting instead the early stages of regrowth after a fire, farming, logging, or other disturbance. Feeds in flocks (coveys) at most seasons, alone or in family groups during breeding season. Diet varies with season and place but includes seeds, leaves, insects also, buds, berries, acorns, roots, spiders, and snails.

Ways You can help with Conservation: Northern Bobwhites were once a common species in eastern North America, but experienced widespread, sharp declines of approximately 3.1% per year, for a cumulative decline of about 81% between 1966 to 2019, according to the [North American Breeding Bird Survey](#). The bobwhite’s decline probably results from habitat degradation and loss due to urbanization, fire suppression, and changes to agriculture and forestry.

If you own or manage a large tract of land, consider managing it as grassland or meadow, especially by using prescribed burns. Agricultural fields have become less



Photo by Jodi Taylor



Photo by Stephen Pollard

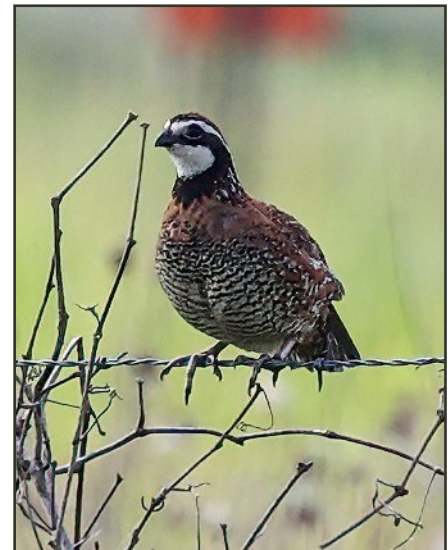


Photo by Tom Driscoll

suitable for bobwhites with higher levels of pesticides and herbicides yielding less insect and plant food, and fewer hedgerows to provide cover. Some landscapes, when managed with prescribed fire, grazing, or other controlled disturbances, can produce high bobwhite densities. Bobwhites nest on the ground which make the young more easily subject to predation. [Actions that we can take to help all birds are keeping cats indoors, planting native and stopping the use of pesticides.](#)