

ANIMAL OF THE MONTH

Colinus virginianus

Northern Bobwhite

Habitat and Distribution

Bobwhites prefer grasslands, open woodlands, brushy fields, and agricultural areas. They thrive in habitats with a mix of grasses for cover and open areas for feeding. Their populations are most abundant in the Southeastern United States, but they are also found in Mexico and the Caribbean islands.

Description:

Bobwhites are small (140 to 170 grams) galliform birds with rounded wings and a square tail. They range in length from 20.3 to 24.7 cm with a wingspan from 9 to 12 cm. They are sexually dimorphic with regard to facial and throat coloration, wing coverts, and beak color. Adult males are distinguished by white facial stripes and throat in contrast to the buff coloration of females and juveniles. The wing coverts of males have sharply contrasting black markings on the feathers while the wing coverts of females lack color distinctions. The base of the mandible is black in males and yellow in females. White edges, dark bars, and vermiculations on the reddish brown back and white breast create a mottled appearance.



Feeding/Diet

Bobwhites are omnivorous. Their diet consists mainly of seeds, grains, berries, and insects. During summer, insects (grasshoppers, beetles, ants, and caterpillars) make up a large portion of their diet, especially for chicks that need protein for rapid growth. In winter, they rely heavily on seeds and plant matter.

Conservation Status and Threats

Populations of northern bobwhite are declining. Habitat loss, particularly due to the increase in large-scale farming and the reduction of fence rows and suitable habitat plots are thought to be the major factor in the decline.

IUCN Status : Near Threatened

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