

JAPANESE QUAIL

Coturnix japonica

Other: *Manukapalulu*

monotypic

naturalized (non-native) resident, long established

The Japanese Quail is a short-distance migrant which breeds in n. Mongolia to e. Siberia, the Kuril Is, and through Japan, and winters south to n. Indochina and the Ryukyu Is (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1952, AOU 1998). It was formerly considered a subspecies of the Common Quail (*C. coturnix*) of W Eurasia and Africa but is now considered a monotypic species. It has been introduced to the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, and is now locally established in mid-elevation grasslands on several islands. There are reports of it interbreeding with "domestic strains" (presumably of *C. coturnix*) released in Hawaii to train hunting dogs (D. Woodside in Long 1981).

W. Hillebrand first brought and released "Chinese Quail" to Honolulu in 1866 (Henshaw 1900b, Locey 1937, Meier 2005:37), referring to *Coturnix*, but this introduction was likely not successful (see also [Non-Established List](#)). There is no further mention of *Coturnix* in the literature until Caum (1933) reported that an unknown number of Japanese Quail (from Japan) had been introduced to Maui and Lana'i in 1921, where they quickly became established (*E* 16:35, Bryan 1958, Walker 1967). HBFA reports (*HFA* vols. 21-30) indicate importation, propagation, and release of numerous *Coturnix* quail, apparently including at least 8 Japanese Quail released on Kaua'i in 1929-1930 and 40 released on O'ahu in 1930 (Swedberg 1967a). There are no specific records of releases on other Southeastern Islands and it is possible that individuals of this migratory species reached Moloka'i and Hawai'i (see below) on their own. By 1947, Schwartz and Schwartz (1949) recorded them as established on all major islands.

On *Ni'ihau*, Fisher (1951) reported that they were widespread after release in the 1930s, but in 1947 he found them only locally distributed on grassy plateaus in the e. portion of the island. On *Kaua'i*, observations were made during the 1940-2010s along the e. shores from Hanapepe to Hanalei NWR (*E* 28:82-83; see Schwartz and Schwartz 1949, Denny 1999). They are locally distributed, with high counts being 12 recorded on the Kapa'a Christmas Count in Dec 1974 (*E* 35:118) and 6 on the Lihue count in Dec 1981 (*E* 42:83). Schwartz and Schwartz (1949) also recorded them in low densities in sw. Kaua'i and occasional reports continue through 2016. Munro (in Gregory 1931) indicated that Japanese Quail were increasing rapidly after release on *O'ahu* in 1930; however, there are very few documented reports since. Schwartz and Schwartz (1949) record two observations, on the sw. slopes of the Ko'olau Mts above Pearl City and above Helemanu. They were reportedly present near Palikea Peak in the Waianae Mts in June 1966 (*E* 28:18). Subsequently, individuals were flushed on Waipi'o Peninsula 9 Jan 1977, found dead on the highway near Waile'e, along the N Shore 27 Oct 1985 (BPBM 161938), and heard near Kaiwailoa along the N Shore 16 Jul 1986. Small populations of this cryptic species possibly persist in the remote w. Waianae range, n. Ko'olau Mts, and/or elsewhere in rural sections of O'ahu. On *Moloka'i*, Japanese Quail were noted to be locally common in mid-elevation grasslands between Maunaloa and Kala'e, as well as in e. portions of the island in the early 1960s (Pekelo 1964; see map in Schwartz and Schwartz 1949) but there have been no reports since. On *Lana'i*, they were well-

established in the 1910-1920s (Munro 2007, *in* Gregory 1930), at least four specimens were collected in 1928-1929 (BPBM 7211, 7346-47; USNM 317140), and the species was listed as uncommon in 1966 (*E* 27:28). It is possible that populations of this cryptic species persist on these seldom-covered islands. Schwartz and Schwartz (1949) indicate discrete populations present in the nw. and e. portions of *Maui*, but there have since been reported only from the slopes above Makawao, where one was collected in 1945 (BPBM 10017), numbers were noted in late summer 1951 (*E* 12:31), and there were scattered reports through the early 2000s (e.g., *E* 22:52, 48:47, Scott et al. 1986). On *Hawai'i I*, Schwartz and Schwartz (1949) reported a population of >39,000 (among a statewide population of 71,880) but numbers through the early 2010s seemed much lower. They have been reported from scattered areas on the slopes the Kohala Mts, Mauna Kea, Mt. Hualalai, and Mauna Loa (Schwartz and Schwartz 1949, Scott et al. 1986), with occasional observations since 1949 (e.g., *E* 19:3, 25:8, 27:22, Lewin 1971, 41:47, Scott et al. 1986) through the early 2010s, especially on the south slopes of Mauna Kea, attesting to their continued persistence. An adult female with five chicks was observed at Ainahou Ranch, Volcanoes National Park 7 June 1979, one of few records of breeding in Hawaii.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>