

Northern Bobwhite: A Year in the Uplands

The Northern Bobwhite, *Colinus virginianus*, is a small, ground-dwelling, upland bird found in central and eastern North America. Once common, these quail are facing declines throughout their range due to habitat loss, fire suppression, and poor forest management. Understanding their basic year-round needs is critical to survival and reproduction.



Northern Harrier

Fall

Winter

Fall Shuffle

In late summer to early fall, birds from different broods begin to intermix, and flock groups looking for long-term food sources and cover. Groups average 10-14 birds.

Overwintering

In winter, a group will flock to woody vegetation such as pine shrubs. As winter they will form a tight circle under light cover with their heads facing inward, allowing them to remain vigilant and warm.

Nesting

Nests are concealed on shallow depressions, often at the base of a native bunchgrass clump. On average, hens lay between 11-17 eggs. Both males and females incubate nests.

Brood Rearing

Adults select areas with overhead cover and dense under-story vegetation allow chicks to safely forage. Adults stay in both coverstrata. Invertebrates are attracted to native herbs, so a diversity of both is important.

Summer

Spring

Pair Bonding

By spring, groups will break up and pair bonding will begin. Male Bobwhite will sing their namesake "Bob-White" call to attract potential mates. These bonds can break and reform over the breeding season.

Basic Habitat Needs

Bobwhites need a mix of 50 bare ground, 30 native forbs (wildflowers) and legumes, 10 native bunchgrasses, and 10 shrub cover. Disturbance, such as prescribed fire, is key to maintaining habitat.



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