

## THE CALIFORNIA QUAIL OF CENTRAL BAJA CALIFORNIA

By A. J. VAN ROSSEM

In the time which has elapsed since Grinnell's "Distributional Summation of the Ornithology of Lower California" was published in 1928, a considerable amount of exploratory work has been accomplished. More adequate series of specimens have been obtained in the San Pedro Mártir and Cape regions. Of more importance is the fact that collections from the little-known middle parts of the peninsula demonstrate or indicate, as the case may be, that several definable races of birds additional to those already known occupy that area. It follows as a corollary that the abruptly distinct character of the Cape region avifauna is further emphasized. In other words, a number of differentiates, which even as late as 1928 were presumed on the then existing evidence to penetrate for varying distances northward, are now shown to be sharply restricted in range.

A case in point is that of the California Quail, *Lophortyx californica*. Grinnell assumed that the range of the Cape form, *achrusteri*, extended northward to latitude 30°, but he listed specimens of *achrusteri* examined by him from only three places in mid-peninsula in addition to those from La Paz, a locality at which the characters of *achrusteri* are not altogether constant. In the present study I have examined 157 specimens of the California Quail from Baja California, in addition to the original series of *canfieldae* from Owens Valley in east-central California and a large series of *L. c. californica* from the general range of that race. The Dickey Collection contains 16 specimens from various mid-peninsular localities and 14 *achrusteri* from the Cape region. The collections in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology have furnished 16 from mid-peninsula, 26 *achrusteri*, and a series of 74 *plumbea*. This material reveals that the greater part of the peninsula of Baja California, more specifically the great area between the Cape region and latitude 30° is inhabited by a distinct race which is described below.

### *Lophortyx californica decolorata*, new subspecies Grinnell California Quail

*Type*.—Adult male, no. 30046 Dickey Collection, taken at Bahía Concepción, Gulf coast of Baja California, México, March 26, 1930, by A. J. van Rossem.

*Subspecific characters*.—The most uniformly grayish race of *Lophortyx californica*, characterized by the almost complete obsolescence of olivaceous tones dorsally and of brown tones on sides and flanks. Resembles *Lophortyx californica achrusteri* of the Cape region and *Lophortyx californica canfieldae* of east-central California in pallor of coloration but differs in the obsolescence of olive and brownish tones as stated above and by the even paler yellow of the pectoral region of the males. Comparison with the dark *L. c. plumbea* to the north is not essential.

*Range*.—Baja California from about latitude 25° to latitude 30°.

As was observed in the original description of *canfieldae* (Auk, 56, 1939:68), there is little difference between that race and *achrusteri*, save that *canfieldae* is a little lighter gray on the chest, a little less olivaceous dorsally, and has a smaller bill. Were the ranges contiguous, it is debatable whether nomenclatural separation of the two populations would prove practicable. They are separated, though, by nearly a thousand miles of territory and by the interposition of three other races. This similarity between *canfieldae* and *achrusteri* is worth stressing in view of the diverse nature of the climates of the respective habitats—a high Lower Sonoran situation with marked seasonal and daily temperature ranges, and an equable Arid Tropical environment. The annual rainfall

is roughly equal in the two areas, although coming at different seasons, but this does not necessarily imply equality in mean annual relative humidity.

La Paz, the type locality of *achruster*, has been a center of extensive collecting. This, in some ways, is unfortunate since its location at the northern edge of the Cape region may produce specimens not expressive of the best development of Cape races. They may show varying degrees of tendency toward the characters of mid-peninsular

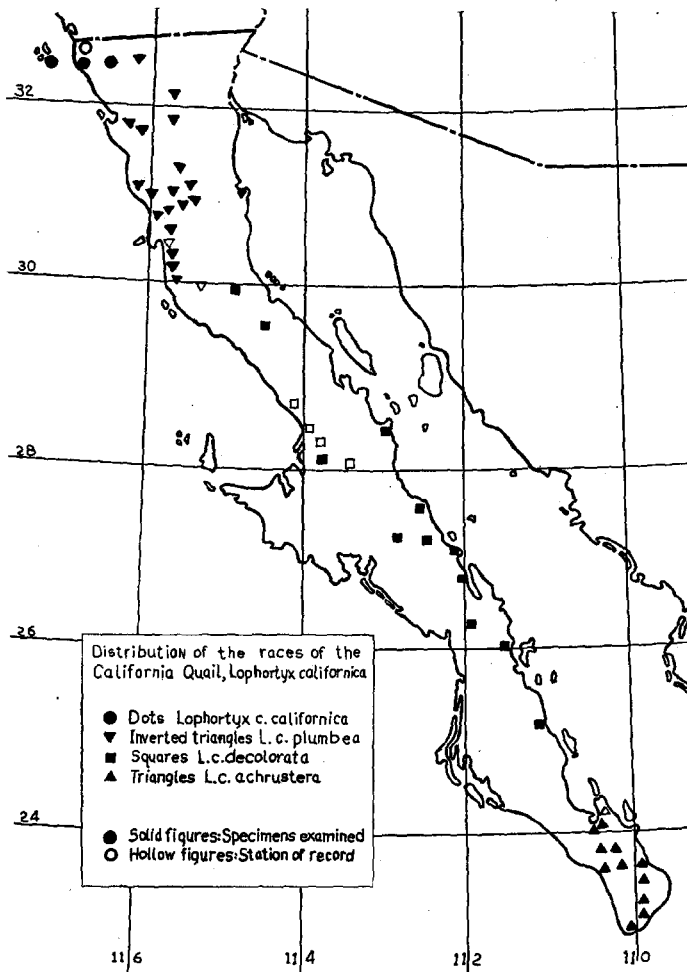


Fig. 61. Distribution of the races of *Lophortyx californica* in Baja California.

populations. In the present instance four quail from La Paz in the Dickey Collection average closer to *decolorata*. However, 15 in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology are unmistakably closer to specimens from other southern points and there is little doubt that the name *achruster* applies in that direction. A similar difficulty has been encountered in a recent review of the Baja California forms of the Black-throated Sparrow (Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist., 10, 1945:239), the type locality of one of which is La Paz.

*Specimens examined.*—*L. c. achruster*, 40: La Paz and vicinity, 19; Miraflores, 4; Cape San Lucas, 1; Agua Caliente, 1; Santa Anita, 1; Todos Santos, 2; San José del Cabo, 5; El Oro, 1; Triunfo, 1. *L. c. decolorata*, 32: Rancho Mesquital, 2; San Ignacio, 7; 25 miles E San Ignacio, 1; Santa Ana Bay, 6; Comodú, 1; Cataviña, 1; San Agustín, 2; Santa Teresa Bay, 4; Loreto, 1; San Bruno, 1; Concepción Bay, 5; Dolores Bay, 1. *L. c. plumbea*, 74: 10 mi. E El Rosario, 1; Misión Santa María, 1; San Fernando, 3; North end Nachogüero Valley, 6; Rancho Ojos Negros, 1; 20 mi. E Ensenada, 1; Sierra Juárez [El Rayo and Laguna Hanson], 12; Valle de la Trinidad, 6; San José, 4; Vallecitos, 2; San Felipe, 2; El Cajón Cañon, 12; Valladares, 1; Colnett, 1; San Telmo, 1; Santo Domingo, 4; San Ramón, 2; Arroyo Nueva York, 5; La Grulla, 7; Socorro, 1. *L. c. californica*, 11 from Baja California: Los Coronados Islands, 3; South end Valle de las Palmas, 6; 5 mi. S Mon. 258, 2 [also large series from the general range]. *L. c. canfieldae*, 16 from Owens Valley, California.

*Dickey Collections, University of California at Los Angeles, May 27, 1946.*