

## Habitat management for

*chukar partridge*

# CHUKAR PARTRIDGE



In the State of Oregon

The chukar (*Alectoris graeca*), a native of southern Asia, was successfully introduced into Oregon in 1951. It has become established in many locations east of the Cascades, along the Columbia and Snake Rivers and in south central Oregon.

### HABITAT NEEDS

Chukars inhabit the "breaks" of both large and small streams of eastern Oregon, usually where a portion of the canyon is below 3,000 feet in elevation. These areas are characterized by steep grassy slopes, rocky rims, and talus slopes. During the dry summer and fall months chukars concentrate near water. After the fall rains start the new green grass, and through the early spring months, chukars are no longer dependent upon open water and are widely distributed.

Food. Chukars eat seeds, tender green leaves of grasses, forbs, and insects. The dominance of cheatgrass, *Bromus tectorum*, over much of the chukar range is one of the big factors in their successful establishment. Cheatgrass is annual and available when other foods are scarce. It thrives in cool weather. Its ability to germinate early in the spring or in the fall provides a long green forage period, even into winter. When deep snows occur, chukars will seek out green shoots under sagebrush plants or in deer tracks.

Foods preferred by chukars include:

Alfalfa	Clover	Ricegrass (Indian)
Balsamroot	Corn	Serviceberry
Barley	Currant	Sumac (smooth)
Bluegrass (Sandberg)	Fescue (Idaho)	Sunflower
Brome (mountain)	Oats	Wheat
Cheatgrass	Onion (wild)	Wheatgrass (bluebunch)

Other foods chukars will eat include:

Barnyardgrass	Millet (proso)	Sagebrush
Chokecherry	Potatoes	Teasel
Millet (foxtail)	Rose	

Animal foods comprise about 20 percent of the diet. Some of the more important items include ants, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, and wasps.

Cover. Chukars seek cover in rocky rims, escarpments, and talus slopes. Bunchgrass, sagebrush, and other native plants also provide cover. The birds tend to run uphill when alarmed and generally fly downhill, often across canyons, when flushed.

Nesting. Nesting starts in late April or May and is on open slopes beside a shrub, rock, or clump of grass.

Roosting. Roosting takes place on open exposed slopes, often near the top of a ridge.

#### MANAGEMENT

Fence off and protect a two acre plot of native grassland near water in good chukar country. The purpose of this is to provide nesting cover and an area for the young chicks to find the insects they require.

Water. Water is required in summer or when succulent foods are lacking. Providing water is probably the most important management practice for extending the range of chukars.

Hunting. The most successful method for hunting chukars is to contour around the slopes and rims near the top of a ridge. Once a flock has been flushed and scattered, the birds can often be put up again in small groups at closer range. Good chukar hunting can be enhanced by access road development into areas where these birds abound. The chukar is becoming a popular bird for use on shooting preserves.