

This resource is based on the following source:

Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

This resource can be cited as:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2003, January 6. Florida's breeding bird atlas: A collaborative study of Florida's birdlife. <http://www.myfwc.com/bba/> (Date accessed mm/dd/yyyy).

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*

The Northern Bobwhite, the most popular game bird in the United States ranges over the entire country west to eastern Texas, Colorado, and the Dakotas and north to Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario, and Maine.

Habitat. The Northern Bobwhite is a species that has probably benefited from human activity in Florida because it favors fields, clear-cuts, overgrown pastures, meadows, and even vacant lots. As humans cleared the state's forests, they created ideal habitat for this bird. Northern Bobwhites are an upland species; therefore, the drainage of wetlands has probably benefited them as well.

Northern Bobwhites feed mostly on vegetable matter, such as grain, the seeds of weeds and other plants, and fruit. Animal matter, composing approximately 16% of their diet, consists of insects and other invertebrates (Howell 1932).

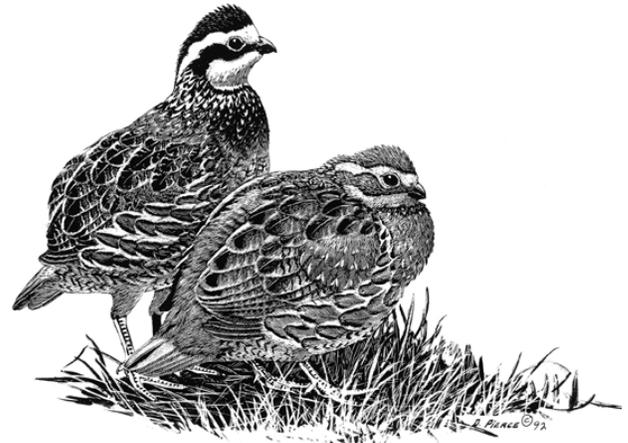


Illustration © 1995 Diane Pierce, All Rights Reserved.

Northern Bobwhites build a well-hidden nest in dense cover on the ground, usually near a clearing. The nest is shallow hollow lined with plant material. Live plants are usually pulled down over the nest to conceal it. Twelve to 16 eggs comprise a typical clutch, but nests with as many as 28 eggs have been reported (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Eggs are unmarked and white, cream, or buffy and are laid at roughly 1-day intervals. Young are precocial and leave the nest almost immediately after hatching. Their flight feathers grow rapidly so that they can fly short distances at about 1 week of age. They are fully feathered in about 6 weeks and full-grown at 8 weeks.

Seasonal Occurrence. Northern Bobwhites may raise 2 broods per season, beginning as early as mid-February (Howell 1932). Coveys of 1 or more broods remain together through the winter and break up the following spring (Harrison 1978).

Status. Two subspecies of the Northern Bobwhite breed in the state: *C. v. virginianus* in the Panhandle and north Florida; and *C. v. floridanus* occurring from Gainesville southward (Stevenson 1976).

A look at the Atlas map reveals that the Northern Bobwhite breeds in every county in Florida; although, it is largely absent from the Everglades, the agricultural areas of Palm Beach County, and coastal Broward County. Other blank spots on the map probably represent quadrangles that were insufficiently surveyed. Northern Bobwhites are sedentary; therefore, they almost certainly breed everywhere they are recorded as a "possible" "probable" breeder.

Robert W. Loftin

Sponsored by Karen Galley

Northern Bobwhite

