

EX LIBRIS

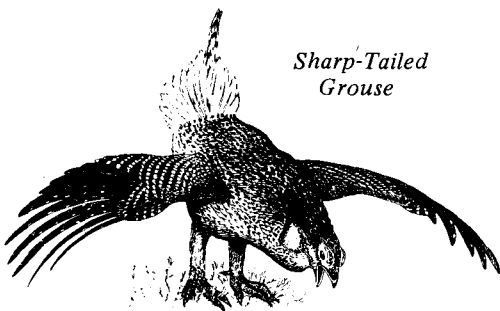


by Sheldon Dingle

North American Game Birds of Upland and Shoreline by Paul A. Johnsgard is a very welcome book on the current market. It is an excellent field guide but at the same time a well rounded compendium of information on thirty-three species of non-waterfowl game birds.

Dr. Johnsgard, of course, is well known to the game bird fanciers of the world. He is a professor of zoology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and has five other books to his credit including *Grouse and Quails of North America* which has become the quail breeder's bible. His *Waterfowl: Their Biology and Natural History* is a fantastic waterfowl book loaded with color photographs.

In addition to his learning and extensive background in game birds, Dr. Johnsgard has a talent for writing and for drawing birds. This combination of talents has been used to maximum advantage in producing *North American Game Birds*. The book is published by the University of Nebraska Press and has a list price of \$6.95 in soft cover edition.



Sharp-Tailed Grouse

In the book there are twenty-two color plates, twenty-nine black and white plates, twenty-nine maps and diagrams, and many line drawings of the highest quality. Incidentally, all of the line drawings and most of the photographs are by the author. The drawings illustrating this article are from the book.

Upon examining the volume one first comes to a chapter titled, "Introduction To The Biology of Game Birds". This remarkable three page chapter is written in clean, crisp language and is a veritable goldmine of information. The system of classifying birds is explained. Another paragraph explains enough game bird anatomy to enable a person to tell the species, age, and sex of a bird being studied. The mating behavior of game birds is dealt with by references to the types of birds that tend to be monogamous, polygamous, or promiscuous. Of course, this knowledge can be used by a wise breeder to enhance his breeding results among his game birds. The chapter contains many other important facts regarding birds. It is one of the most informative chapters I have ever read in any book.

Another chapter, not without controversy, deals with the hunting and recreational value of gamebirds. When hunters are mentioned, most aviculturists manifest an emotional over-reaction. In this chapter Dr. Johnsgard treats the hunter-bird lover problem with a cool intelligence. He first notes that an average of 16% of the adult males in the United



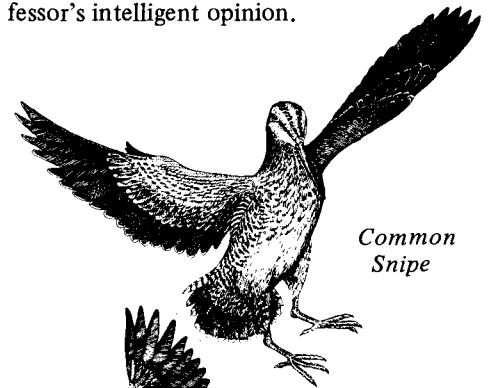
Harlequin Quail

States hunt game birds. They spend nearly a billion dollars annually. About 35 million Bobwhite quail, 12 million Ring-necked pheasants, and 9 million Mourning doves are harvested each year. All species included, about 60 million pounds of meat are taken home annually by hunters.

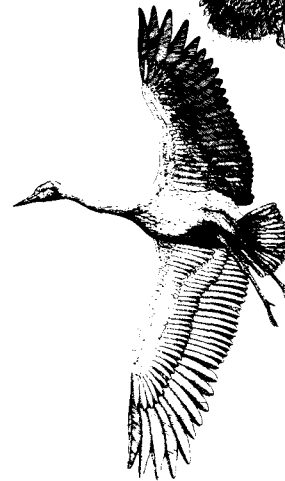
A less tangible but very important aspect of hunting is pointed out by Dr. Johnsgard. He says:

It seems to me a general truism that hunters gradually become more aware of these [the great outdoors] additional pleasures and the daily or seasonal kill becomes a secondary consideration. Indeed, many persons (the author included) who have had their outdoor interests initially whetted by hunting eventually give it up altogether, and substitute bird-watching, bird photography, hiking, or other nonconsumptive activities for the more competitive and destructive aspects of hunting.

He goes on to evaluate the economic and recreational importance of game birds. His opinions are based on data that is displayed in charts and tables for the reader. The entire chapter is very well done and any level-headed hunter or aviculturist will concur with the professor's intelligent opinion.



Common Snipe



Lesser Sandhill Crane

The remainder of the book is comprised of twenty-nine chapters each treating one or more species of game bird. These chapters are the heart of the book. Here one really learns about individual species in some detail. There are too many species to relate in this brief report but the families of birds include Grouse, Quails, Partridges, Pheasants, Ptarmigan (*Order Galliformes*); Cranes, Rails, Coots, and Gallinules (*Order Gruiformes*); Woodcocks and Snipes (*Order Charadriiformes*); Pigeons and Doves (*Order Columbiformes*).

Each chapter is well organized beginning with the name of the bird, the vernacular name, the range, identification, field marks, age and sex criteria, habitat and foods, social behavior, and reproductive biology. To my knowledge, this amount and kind of information is not available in any other single source. Dr. Johnsgard has pulled together much research and put it into a well organized and highly readable form.

All who are involved with birds will welcome this volume. Whether you're an aviculturist, naturalist, bird watcher, or sportsman, your enjoyment of birds will be increased when you absorb the knowledge presented in *North American Game Birds*.