

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
Game Division

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First Field Trial Use of Coturnix Quail in Michigan

Michigan's first field trial in which Coturnix quail (Coturnix coturnix japonica) were used took place at Island Lake Recreation Area in Livingston County on June 30, 1957. The trial was held by the Weimaraner Dog Club. Ammann, Cooley, and I attended to observe Coturnix in action.

Don Ray, chairman of the field trial, received a shipment of 100 Coturnix on June 26. They came from the Briarwood Game Bird Farm at Norwalk, Ohio. Quoted price for 100 Coturnix is \$90.00. The birds were not yet fully mature, being about four weeks old. They are fully mature at about seven weeks. Many of the birds were somewhat watersoaked due to large water containers being used, into which the birds readily jumped. There were 20 birds per crate and many were picked quite severely on their backs. They appeared very small, about half the size of bobwhite quail.

Five Coturnix were planted in an alfalfa field about 10 minutes ahead of the dogs on the first trial. These first birds ran quite a bit from the point of release, some as much as 60 yards. When pointed, the Coturnix would normally flush reluctantly and fly weakly a short distance (10 to 30 yards). One bird was pointed, finally picked up by the dog's handler and thrown into the air and shot. Another flew so slowly that the dog giving chase snapped at the bird as it flew and then picked it up as soon as it landed.

Generally speaking, the Coturnix released early in the day impressed very few of the dog trainers, primarily because of their small size and the weakness of their flight. One point in favor of Coturnix was that they held very well when pointed. Later on during the day the Coturnix quail seemed to fly somewhat better. Most of these birds were among those released during the early part of the trial. Perhaps the longer release period had something to do with the stronger flight. According to the January, 1957, Indiana P-R wildlife research report, hunters who bagged Coturnix in that state (1956 experimental releases) were unanimous in their praise of the bird as a sporty target. Perhaps fully mature Coturnix and better handling techniques will provide the answer for a stronger flying bird. Certainly, the weak flying Coturnix which we observed would prove unsatisfactory as a Michigan game bird.

I believe, from what I have seen so far, that the future of Coturnix quail in Michigan should be limited to field trials and dog training and possibly in preserve shooting. Because of their migratory habits it is likely most of the Coturnix would be unavailable to Michigan hunters anyway.

Two study specimens of the Coturnix, one male and one female, were prepared by Ammann and are available for observation at the Lansing office.

V. S. Janson

