

Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse

The Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse is a species of bird that roams the vast deserts and arid landscapes of the world. With its sleek and streamlined body, it can glide effortlessly through the harsh winds and scorching heat of the day, seeking out seeds and grains to fuel its energy.

Its plumage is a marvel to behold, a tapestry of soft, muted browns and greys that blend seamlessly into the arid landscape. Its chestnut-brown belly is a stark contrast to the rest of its muted feathers, a vibrant burst of color that adds to its natural beauty.

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| Serial Number | Characteristics | Description |
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| 1 | Common Name | Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse |
| 2 | Scientific Name | Pterocles exustus |
| 3 | Colour | Males have greyish-brown upperparts and chestnut underparts, while females have mottled brown upperparts and buff underparts |
| 4 | Average Length in cms | 30-35 cm |
| 5 | Average Height in cms | 23-25 cm |
| 6 | Type of Bird | Ground bird |
| 7 | Found in India in States | Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab |
| 8 | Habitat | Arid and semi-arid regions, including deserts, grasslands, and scrubland |

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| 9 | Status | Least Concern |
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Features

The Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse is a medium-sized bird, typically measuring around 30 to 35 centimeters (12 to 14 inches) in length and weighing between 250 to 350 grams (8.8 to 12.3 ounces).

It has a distinctive appearance, with a small head, a plump body, and short, rounded wings. The sandgrouse has a brownish-grey plumage on its back and wings, with pale, sandy-colored feathers on its breast and belly. As its name suggests, it has a distinctive chestnut-colored patch on its belly, which sets it apart from other sandgrouse species.

The sandgrouse has a sturdy, compact build and short, strong legs that are adapted for walking and running on the ground. Its beak is relatively short and curved, ideal for plucking seeds and grains from the desert floor.

Habitat and Food

The Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse is a desert bird that can be found in a wide range of arid and semi-arid habitats, including deserts, scrublands, and rocky hillsides. It is native to parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

In terms of diet, the Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse is primarily a seed-eating bird, feeding on a variety of grasses, herbs, and shrubs that are found in its arid habitat. It has a specialized digestive system that allows it to extract nutrients and water from even the driest and toughest seeds.

The sandgrouse is also known for its unique feeding behavior, which involves drinking water in a very unusual way. Rather

than dipping its beak directly into a water source, the sandgrouse will soak its belly feathers in water and then fly back to its nest or young, where it will regurgitate the water for them to drink. This behavior is critical for the survival of the Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse, as water sources can be scarce and difficult to find in the harsh desert environment.

Nesting and Nurturing

The Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse is a fascinating bird not only for its stunning appearance but also for its unique nesting habits. These birds usually nest on the ground, choosing a spot in a sheltered area, often under a bush or a small tree. The female sandgrouse will use grasses and small twigs to create a shallow depression in the ground as a nest.

The Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse lays around two to three eggs per clutch, which are typically a pale cream or buff color with brown spots. The eggs are relatively large, measuring about 5cm in length and 3cm in width. After the eggs are laid, the female sandgrouse will incubate them for approximately 19 to 23 days until they hatch.

Once the eggs hatch, the male sandgrouse will take on the primary responsibility of caring for the young. He will bring them water several times a day by soaking his feathers in water and then flying back to the nest to let the chicks drink from the damp feathers. This is a vital role in the harsh desert environment, as water is scarce, and the young birds need it to survive.

As the chicks grow, both parents will take part in caring for them. The young sandgrouse will stay with their parents until they are fully fledged and can fly on their own, which usually takes around three weeks. During this time, the parents will teach the chicks essential skills, such as how to find food and water, and how to avoid predators in the harsh desert landscape.

IUCN Status

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species currently lists the Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse as a species of “Least Concern”. This indicates that the species is not currently facing any significant threats to its survival, and its population is considered stable. However, as with all wild animals, ongoing habitat loss, climate change, and other environmental pressures could pose a threat to the Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse in the future.