

# Sisters Country birds

By Douglas Beall  
Correspondent

The mountain quail (*Oreortyx pictus*) is the largest quail in the United States. I found these colourful quail on the shoulders of Mt. Jefferson, and while waiting for a good opportunity to capture an image from my truck, had one sitting on a log staring at me and he did not blink for 40 minutes.

In foothills and mountains of the far west, coveys of these striking birds scurry through the manzanita thickets. Mountain quail are often overlooked, because they keep to dense cover; when approached, they often sit motionless in the brush, where they are very difficult to spot. The nest is a simple scrape made by the male, concealed in vegetation, often at the base of a tree and usually close to water. Breeding among mountain quail is monogamous and the female lays 8-15 creamy pinkish eggs.

Incubation lasts 21-25 days, usually performed by the female, rarely by the male. The chicks begin feeding immediately, with insects being the majority of their diet until they slowly add vegetation.

They have a wide variety of foraging techniques. They often pick up items from the ground, scratching among leaf litter and use their feet to dig for bulbs, also they climb in shrubs and trees to pick berries.

Although their secretive nature makes it difficult to accurately census, they have clearly experienced a great decline in the past 50 years in parts of their range.

A group of quails has many collective nouns, including a "battery," "drift," "flush," "rout," and "shake" of quails.

To view more images of the mountain quail, please visit my website and enjoy the small things: [www.abirdsingsbecauseithasason.com/recent-journeys](http://www.abirdsingsbecauseithasason.com/recent-journeys).



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BEALL

The mountain quail.

## STARS: Visit Oregon Observatory to learn about astronomy

*Continued from page 7*

Mercury stands 11 degrees above the southwestern horizon half an hour after sunset. This will be the best time to see the planet all year. Venus is there too, of course, as it is the brightest object in the sky after the sun and moon.

The three remaining superior planets are all morning objects. Mars rises first just before 4 a.m. local time at the beginning of the month. Jupiter pops up around 90 minutes before the sun, followed by Saturn 40 minutes later. By the end of February all three planets rise before twilight begins.

Let's not forget about the earth's closest natural body in space. Our moon will become the Full Snow Moon on the 8th, last quarter on February 15 and new moon on February 23. Additionally, the moon will be closest to the earth (perigee) on February 10 at 223,980 miles and farthest away (apogee) on February 26 at 252,450 miles.

If you want to learn more about astronomy, consider a visit to the Oregon Observatory at Sunriver. During February the facility is open for solar viewing Friday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Wednesday and Saturday nights 7 to 9 p.m. The observatory has the largest collection of public viewing telescopes in the country.

### Touch of Class Tours

[www.touchofclasstours.com](http://www.touchofclasstours.com)  
[connie@touchofclasstours.com](mailto:connie@touchofclasstours.com)

**BIG ISLAND-HAWAII**  
APRIL 21-28, 2020  
\$2,849 PPDO

Includes air, taxes, transfers, 7 nts, Big Island Tour, Seahorse Farm Tour, Parker Ranch w/lunch, Royal Kona Luau & more!

**BRANSON, MO**  
MAY 13-19, 2020  
STARTING AT \$2,349 PPDO  
Includes air, taxes, transfers, 12 meals, 11 shows/attraction, 7 days/6 nights.

**ALASKA CRUISE**  
MAY 27-JUNE 6, 2020  
STARTING AT \$2,699 PPDO  
Includes air, taxes, transfers. Anchorage, Fairbanks, Denali Wilderness Lodge, Hubbard Glacier, Glacier Bay, Skagway, Juneau, Ketchikan, Vancouver, B.C.

**WINNEMUCCA, NV**  
JUNE 19-21, 2020  
\$124 PPDO  
Two nights & \$15 in free slot play, and \$15 in food coupons!

**WINNEMUCCA, NV**  
AUG 21-23, 2020  
\$124 PPDO  
Two nights & \$15 in free slot play, and \$15 in food coupons! Single occupancy additional \$20

**NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**  
SEPT. 17-22, 2020  
\$2,149 PPDO  
Downtown hotel! General Jackson River Cruise, Grand Ol' Opry, Trolley Tour, Country Music Hall of Fame, Tour of the Ryman Auditorium, Opryland and more.

**Connie Boyle**  
541-508-1500  
Box 615 Sisters, OR 97759

# Deadline looms for writing contest

Tick tock! Waterston Desert Writing Prize submissions for the 2020 prize are due by midnight, April 1. If you are planning to submit, it's time to get serious about applying. Find all the guidelines and a link for submissions at [www.waterstondesertwritingprize.org](http://www.waterstondesertwritingprize.org).

The prize honors creative nonfiction that illustrates artistic excellence, sensitivity to place, and desert literacy, with the desert as both subject and setting. Inspired by author and poet Ellen Waterston's love of the high desert of Central Oregon, a region that has been her muse for over 30 years, the prize recognizes the vital role deserts play worldwide in the ecosystem and the human narrative.

The prize-winner will receive a \$2,500 cash award, a reading and reception at

the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, and a residency at PLAYA at Summer Lake, Oregon. The winner and finalists will be announced in April. The award event, including "A Desert Conversation," will take place Wednesday, June 24, at the High Desert Museum.

The prize is funded from an endowment managed by the Oregon Community Foundation, with the impetus for the creation of the endowment provided by actor Sam Waterston, after whom the prize is named.

For more information about the Waterston Desert Writing Prize, visit [www.waterstondesertwritingprize.org](http://www.waterstondesertwritingprize.org) or email [info@waterstondesertwritingprize.org](mailto:info@waterstondesertwritingprize.org) or call 541-480-3933 or 541-419-0414.

## FEBRUARY 14TH-16TH

# 2020

AT THE OLD MILL DISTRICT

OnPoint  
COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION

OREGON  
**WINTER  
FEST**  
2020

PRESENTED BY  
 AT&T

BEND, OREGON

JOIN THE FUN!

LIVE MUSIC    HOT COCOA RUN  
ARTS & CRAFTS MARKETPLACE    ROYAL RUN  
WINE WALK    FIRE SCULPTURE COMPETITION  
FIRE KING & ICE QUEEN    LIGHT ART EXHIBITION  
ICE CARVING    K9 KING'S DOG SHOW    FAMILY FUN ZONE  
10 BARREL VERTICAL CHALLENGE    OMSI

OREGONWINTERFEST.COM

SHE SOARS PSYCHIATRY

Holistic Mental Health Solutions  
Medication Management  
Counseling • Functional Medicine

541-595-8337 • [www.shesoarspsych.com](http://www.shesoarspsych.com)  
102 E. Main Ave., Downtown Sisters

Audry  
Van Houweling  
PMHNP-BC

Now Accepting  
Insurance

## Bring your equipment in now for pre-season tune-ups and servicing!

Mowers • Lawn Tractors • Blowers  
Trimmers • Chainsaws & More!

# SISTERS RENTAL

506 N. Pine St.  
541-549-9631

Sales • Service • Rentals • Accessories | [www.SistersRental.com](http://www.SistersRental.com)