

## Turkish Chukar To Be Tried Out In California To Fill In Dead Spots In Bird Areas

SACRAMENTO (UPI)—California's Fish and Game Department wants to fill some holes in the state's bird population—specifically chukar partridge.

The chukar, first introduced into the state in 1932 from the Middle East, liked the California climate and reproduced readily. But there were some parts of the state where it refused to respond.

So the state agency looked around the world in an effort to find a partridge with the proper abilities.

They found the Turkish chukar. "We're hoping the Turkish strain is more tolerant to higher rainfall and more humid and brushy country," said Albert Naylor, assistant manager of upland game.

Naylor said reports from foreign nations have been "conflicting" and as a result the California experiment is "partly speculative."

He described the Turkish partridge's native area in Turkey as comprised of a series of rolling, steep hills with boulders and ledges, sparsely covered with weeds or juniper-type of vegetation.

Elevation plays little part in the partridge's distribution, according to Naylor. He said they are found at sea level and at 11,000 feet just below the snow line in the Middle East.

For food, the chukar eats grain, weed seeds, fruits, berries and a variety of leafy-green food as well as some insects.

Naylor has some good news for the farmers. He says that the Turkish chukar hasn't presented any depredation problem although in some of its native areas grain fields are nearby.

California's stock of Turkish chukars actually came from New Mexico. California sent New Mexico some mountain quail and in return got 200 Turkish chukars.

Since then, the state has been raising the Turks at the Yount-

ville game farm and now has 2,000 on hand.

Naylor said the state had hoped to start its experimental plant this fall in five areas—Siskiyou, Monterey, Madera, Los Angeles and San Diego counties.

The plan was to make the fall plant after the rain fell and then

make another planting in the late winter or early spring.

But no rain came.

The state waited . . . and waited . . . and waited. Still no rain in the areas of the proposed plant.

Last week, the department went before the Fish and Game Commission to request permission for the plant—despite the refusal of the weatherman to cooperate.

"Now we probably will be forced to make the two plants fairly close together," said Naylor, but apparently there is nothing else that can be done in view of the weather situation.

He said the Turkish chukars,

since they were raised in game farms, prefer green food—the kind that pops up just after rains. On the farms they are fed commercial starter feeds.

After the plant, it will be a few years before the state can say whether they have been successful.

It's the policy of both the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service and the state Department of Fish and Game to try a plant yearly for three years.

"If they haven't established by then," said Naylor, "we stop the plants."

But if it works, the hunter will have more game for his bag with-

in a few years.

The first chukar season was held in 1954 when hunters got about 2,000. Since then the average has been about 5,500 birds a year during the open season.

The chukar now hunted is an Indian strain, imported from India 27 years ago. The most popular areas for it now are Mono, Inyo, San Bernardino and extreme eastern San Diego counties.

But it's sprinkled over other parts of the state, too. For instance, there is another population on the western side of the Shasta Valley in Siskiyou County and along the inner coast range.

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