



Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Little shy and not uncommon to see at Crete: **Chukar (*Alectoris chukar cypriotex*)**



The *Chukar* (*Alectoris chukar*) is a bird species from the family of pheasants (*Phasianidae*), which belongs to the order of the species of gallinaceous birds (*Galliformes*). It has the largest distribution within the genus of partridges. It is widespread from the South-Eastern Balkans over Middle- and Inner Asia up to the Manchuria. Furthermore it was spearheaded in North America, Hawaii and New Zealand and South Africa. Within this range 14 subspecies have civilized. In Europe located is the type *A. c. cypriotex* which is to be found in Bulgaria, the Aegean Islands, Crete, Rhodes and Asia Minor. The native form *A. c. chukar* lives, however, in the eastern Afghanistan, Kashmir and the Himalayas up to the western Nepal.



The Chukar reaches a body length of 31 to 35 cm, a wing span of 44 to 53 cm and a weight of 450 to 700 gram. Males are partly much larger and heavier than females. The upper feather reveals a drab coloration with slightly bluish shimmer. The wings are mostly brownish in colour at the tips; the same applies to the tail tip. The lateral flanks show a blackish and whitish banding. Characteristic is the black eye tape, which extends from the eye up to the chest and optically separates the whitish throat from the perse chest. The short beak and extremities indicate a strong red colour. The iris is bluish to brownish. Apart from the size difference is there no other difference between the sexes. Young birds indicate increased brown shares in the plumage. The diurnal Chukar lives outside the breeding season sociable in small groups. To the mating season, the birds retreat in pairs.

The nominate is marked by ruby crown which proceeds on the sides and on the back of the head into ash-grey. The forehead is black. A black band moves around the eyes and a reddish-brown ear spot. A grey-white "over eye band" is above the eyes and the ears.

Chukar colonise some very different habitats. These include deserts as well as forest clearings. They also occur in High Mountain up to the snow line in 4.600 meters. They eat seeds, young shoots, fruit and buds. Proteins are taken in the form of insects and small vertebrates to. Chicks are fed mainly on insects, larvae and spiders. In urban areas the Chukar Partridge is also found on agricultural land. In their habitat, the Chukar Partridge depends on the existence of water because it must take drinking water on a daily manner.

The Chukar reached sexual maturity with one year. The chickens live in seasonal monogamy, often the marriage lasts a lifetime. The display of Chukar extends in spring from April to July. Oviposition is most in June or July. During the mating season, especially the males are territorial and very aggressive. The female builds its nest in a simple earth corrie which is also scratched on demand. Padded is the nest with soft grasses and little feather. They lay between nine and fifteen whitish-yellow eggs which have dark brown speckles. Its often be observed that the female splits your clutch. In this case, the males incubate the second clutch. The eggs are warmed and hatch over a period of 24 to 25 days. The hatched chicks are Precocial and follow shortly after hatching the mother. During the first time, the chicks feed exclusively on insects. They are able to fly and independent already after 14 to 16 days. The young reach adult size at about three months. The life expectancy is about five to seven years.



Their song is a noisy *chuck-chuck-chukar-chukar* from which the name is derived. Bask of Chukar are called with this noise; it is also an alarm call of males for the area delimitation.

Previously the Rock Partridge (*Alectoris graeca*) and the Chukar Partridge were describes as one species. Meanwhile it has enforced, to see the two as independent species. Decisive for this classification was the very different vocal repertoire of the two.

Note: *Alectoris chukar* is on the Red List of threatened species of IUCN 2008. Appointed by: BirdLife International, 2004. Version 11. May 2006

© Pictures of Chukar: *Ralf Schwab*, taken at mountain Jouchtas, Prefecture Iraklion (24.03.2008)

Additional information can be found at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chukkar>