

# WOOD GROUSE

## TETRAO UROGALLUS

### GROUSE BIRD

#### DISTINGUISHING MARKS:

Largest of our fowls. Male: head, neck and bottom greyish black, back brown, white fleck in wing elbow. Female: red brown-, black and white coloured. Circular tail. Length: male 92 cm, hen 64 cm, weigh□ male 4 kg, hen is about half smaller.

#### PREVALENCE:

Appears in whole Finland small in number, except the northernmost Lapland.

#### HABITAT:

Lives in diverse coniferous forests, prefers marshy backwoods that are in natural state. In order to feel at home needs at least 5 ha large consistent, peaceful wooded area.

#### LIFE STYLES:

In wintertime wood grouse sits in the top of pine trees, where it stays overnight too. Male wood grouses join for impressive and special courtship around May day. Female takes care of breeding alone. Pecks often grit from gravel roads. It winters in thick pine woods, area can be same for the courtship, too: well grown pine or spruce groves and moors with berries. Courtship field is circular area, about which each cock has his own section. In the middle of the area is actual courtship place. Courtship begins at dawn. Wood grouse hens observe courtship from a little distance and select their mates.

#### NOURISHMENT:

Wintertime: buds, catkins, pine needles, juniper needle. Springtime: wands, old cowberries, spring grass, cotton grass. Summertime: chicks eat insects in the beginnings, blueberry, buds, summer plants, Autumntime: blueberry, leaves and berries.

#### BREEDING:

Wood grouse nests under spruce. The female lays 6-8 yellowish brown-dotted eggs in May and bathes them alone for 24-28 days. The cock won't participate in nesting. The nest is low bowl in the moss in forest or on the logging plain.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE POPULATION:

Wood grouse population has declined steeply in whole country during 1900s, especially in South and Central Finland. From 1945 population has decreased about 45%, as one of the reasons being increasing of raccoon dogs, minks and crow birds that destroy nests.

#### HUNTING:

Hunting powerfully regulated. Hunting time is only in parts of the country, which changes regionally between September and October.

#### PRESERVATION:

With the hunting limitations and the preservation of the courtship areas have tried to guarantee the enduring of the wood grouse. Fox hunting and chasing of the small predators, like racoon dog helps wood grouses to survive.

