



FAST FACTS

Name: Ruffed grouse

Species name: *Bonasa umbellus*

Average length: 40 cm to 48 cm

Average weight: 500 grams

Life expectancy: Average less than 1 year; birds that survive their first year often live 2-3 years

PHYSIOLOGY

The ruffed grouse is a game bird that resembles a chicken and has several common names including partridge, woods pheasant and ruffled grouse. The scientific name, *bonasa umbellus*, comes from Latin: *bonasa* meaning “good when roasted” and *umbellus* meaning “a sunshade.” This refers to its distinguishing dark-coloured neck feathers, particularly large in the male, that are also called the ruff.

The ruffed grouses’ flecked plumage can range in colour from grey to red or a shade of mahogany. The colour of the grouse is affected by its habitat as it uses camouflage to protect itself from predators.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

The ruffed grouse is well adapted to life in thick brush. Although it is primarily a ground-dwelling bird it is very skilled at flying in short spurts and can make rapid twists and turns, which helps it fly in amid thick forest growth. It also is excellent at climbing on thin branches and stems.

The male ruffed grouse is known for its spring mating ritual, known as “drumming.” It stands on a platform, such as a rock, log or stump, and begins beating its wings slowly and then more rapidly, creating a hollow, drumming sound. Drumming not only attracts females but also defends territory from other males.

The ruffed grouse eats the buds and leaves of poplars, birch and alders. They are an important game bird hunted by humans and also by foxes, bobcat, coyotes, hawks and falcons.

RANGE

The ruffed grouse lives in deciduous forests that exist across Canada and from Alaska in the north and northern Georgia in the south. The ruffed grouse does not migrate and lives all of its life within the same few hectares.