

> The importance of sharing

For this cold-weather bird, global warming is clearly a threat in the more or less long term.

In the short term, its main predators in the air are the golden eagle and the great horned owl while on land, foxes attack their nests. When the wild animals leave it alone, it is civilisation that catches up with it and reduces its living space, with cables of all kinds making obstacles in the sky, (ski lifts, power lines, etc.) where it risks being hit. On the ground, it is the ski slopes and hiking trails



that limit its space and force it to move often: a loss of energy that it could do without...

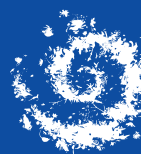
What are the solutions? For the cables, the ski area managers and electricity networks install markers to make them more visible. As for skiers, hikers and other mountain users, the solution lies in one word: respect. A value that should be cultivated on a daily basis, to allow the ptarmigan to continue on its way. As for global

warming, it not only threatens the ptarmigan but all forms of life on earth. Including ourselves!



Expert opinion

- 1/ **TRUE.** And when you hear it, stay quiet.
- 2/ **TRUE.** It has not filed a patent, but its feathered feet and claws allow it, like snowshoes, to walk in the snow without sinking.
- 3/ **FALSE.** At best, some have been seen descending to 1500 m to do their business.
- 4/ **TRUE.** The ptarmigan is actually a member of the partridge family and other galliformes. You can tell by its red eyebrows.



The rock ptarmigan



Family: Phasianidae
Size: 35 to 45 cm
Lifetime: up to 17 years old
Incubation: 21 to 23 days
Egg laying: 6 to 7 eggs
Altitude: from 2000 m up to 3000 m

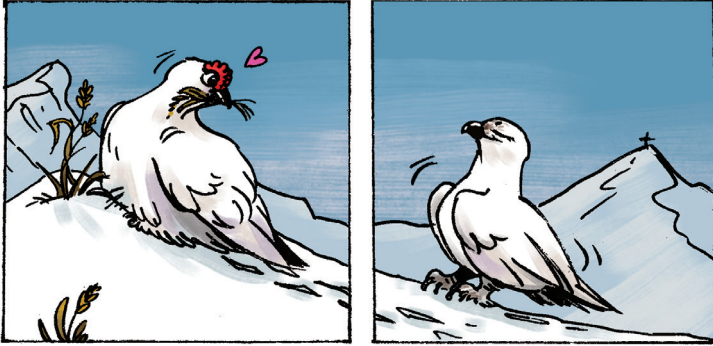
Distinctive features

- ✓ Master in the art of camouflage
- ✓ Enjoys walking in the mountains
- ✓ A lover of extreme cold

At the start

> A bird that comes to us from the cold

Originally from the Arctic, this inhabitant of the Great North took advantage of the last ice age to move into the Alps and the Pyrenees. Even when the glaciers melted, they chose to stay, climbing to the mountain tops to find conditions that favoured their survival. The result: To see them, you will have to aim for an altitude of 2000 m, or even 3000 m.



Male and female

Habitat

> An igloo or nothing

Forget the warmth of the fireplace! Ptarmigan prefer scree slopes on the edge of névés, ridges nearly 3000 m above sea level or alpine meadows with a few dwarf shrubs here and there for decoration only. When winter comes, he can't imagine his cosy nest anywhere but on the coldest slopes, with a thick layer of powder snow serving as an igloo and a cool wind sweeping over the ridges to serve him the plants he needs on a platter. It's like living in a fridge! Their favourite temperatures: negative ones. As soon it reaches around 10-12°C in summer, they are out of their comfort zone.



Daily life

> Oh, it's hard to be homochromatic

"Homochromy is the ability to adapt the colour of its plumage to that of its environment. A gift from heaven, perfect for camouflage, of course! But it forces me to moult three times a year, in summer, autumn and winter. And as my legs are covered with a double layer of feathers for better protection from the cold, I can't tell you how much time and energy I spend changing my clothes."

> Flying? Yes, but in small doses

"Unlike most birds, I prefer walking. Flying is too energy-intensive. In winter I can't afford to waste it. That's another reason why I mustn't be disturbed, because my only salvation is to escape by flying.

On the ground I find every-thing I need. In summer and in the off-season, I eat woody plants that I digest very well and in winter snow fleas that are rich in sugar and proteins, to recharge my batteries. I also make my nest on the ground."



> Children, but in alternating mode

"In spring, I enjoy spending time alone with my partner on an area of no less than 15 hectares. This only lasts until June, when there are 8 or 10 of us after our little ones are born. By mutual agreement, we then separate for two months to let the mother raise her brood as she sees fit. The rest of the time, we live in groups of several dozen individuals. And in this alternating way of life, we really do find a balance."

True or false?

Answers: on the last page

- 1/ Raucous and a little gloomy*, the song of the rock ptarmigan carries several hundred metres
- 2/ The ptarmigan was the inventor of snowshoes
- 3/ / Ptarmigan can be found at 1200 m
- 4/ / It is nicknamed the snow partridge