

---

# Quail Log: March 26<sup>th</sup> to May 4<sup>th</sup>

by: Gerry Rodin/Jeani Garrett

## A PRIMER ON QUAIL BIRTHING

---

March 26th: Wow! Look! We have a bird egg in our planter by the front door! But isn't it strange that there is no bird sitting there? We watch off and on all day. No bird! Well, I suppose she changed her mind.

March 29th: Look! Now we have three eggs. So maybe the bird likes this planter after all. But still no bird sitting on the eggs. They are about the size of an oblong 50-cent piece, off-white in color and spotted. Since it appears that we are to have a nest here in the planter, we have shut off the drip system. Guess they should learn to fly before swimming.

April 1st: Today we have five eggs, and find the mother Quail sitting on them. She did not stay very long, however. Is she a lazy mother, or what?

April 3rd: Seven eggs, and no mother Quail. Not sure when she is laying the eggs or if they will hatch, as she does not sit on them very long.

April 5th: This morning early, we see the pair of Quail walking around the planter together. Then they both jump up to the rim, walk around, and the mother Quail



photo courtesy kay encim  
<http://encimfineart.com>



jumps into the planter. Begins jerking her head forward and backward (similar to the passengers in the new car commercials). She stands, she sits.... Later in the day, we are up to ten eggs!

April 6th: Egg count is 13

April 7th: Egg count is 14

April 8th: Egg count is 15 (picture below shows 14)

April 9th: Egg count is 15 and holding. Mother Quail is now sitting on the nest



most of the time. While speaking with LaVonne Lindall of the Desert Awareness Committee, she informs me that the mother will start sitting on the eggs when she has finished laying all that she will lay. This is the way she can determine they will all hatch about the same time. What a smart bird! The incubation period for Quail runs from 17 to 22 days. Let's see how our group does.

Also, a Quail can produce from 200 to 250 eggs a year, having more than one batch.

May 1st: Our first egg has hatched! Tiny round ball with short legs runs 'round and 'round the planter. The mother Quail tries to "sit on it," but it is really feisty, and wants to get out to see the world. He sits on the left edge of the planter, under the chin of our Horny Toad sculpture.

May 2nd, 10:00 AM: All the chicks have hatched and the mother is off the nest. We take a picture. The chicks are running around, jumping and jumping. Trying to get out of the planter. It is 4½" from the nest to the top of the planter.

12:30 PM: Mother back on the nest, chicks all quiet.

6:30 PM: One chick has jumped out! Perhaps it is the first one that hatched. The father Quail is walking around with it. It runs all around the area by the planter. The mother is on the nest with the rest of the chicks. The "runaway" is continually running around, the father trying to get it to come with him. Finally the father sits on the ground, close to the foundation of the house watching his youngster.

7:00 PM: Chick will not stay with the father.



7:30 PM: Chick is getting very tired, and is wobbly. It's starting to get dark; we open the door to get a better view, and the chick starts to come toward the door! We close the door, get a paper sack and go back out. Not touching him, we scoop him up, and deposit him in the planter much to the consternation of the mother. She "flies the coop" for the time being. We go back inside.

May 3rd 6:30 AM: All birds and Mom in the nest. All is quiet.

11:30 AM: Mom and Dad GONE! All chicks huddled together against the side of the planter. Very still. We thought they had gone, but all are there.

2:30 PM: Parents still away from the nest. Chicks are all sleeping.

3:00 PM: Several of the chicks have jumped out of the planter and are on the ground running around. Parents are nowhere to be seen! The other chicks are in the planter. As we watch, we see two chicks, one at a time, jump on the plastic drip tube and up to the top of the planter, look around, then jump off to the ground.

4:12 PM: Now there are only four chicks left in the planter. We can see most of the others on the ground, in the shrubs by the planter. Their coloring of black, brown, and yellow stripes provides a really excellent camouflage! So hard to see unless they move.

7:00 PM: Four chicks still in the nest and really screaming! They are running around and around. Keep trying to jump to the edge. They seem so tired and afraid. No mother or father or siblings now in sight.

7:30 PM: Four still there and not wanting to be. I took a very shallow jar lid, filled it with water, and pounded a couple of cookies to crumbs. I went out to the planter, and the chicks became very quiet, huddled together. I placed the water and cookies in the planter and returned to the house.

As I watched from inside, after a while the four chicks began running around, loudly chirping again. NOT eating cookie crumbs, NOT drinking water. Finally, one ran into the water-filled lid, AND SAT DOWN IN IT! Then a second chick ran and sat in the lid! The other two were running around the planter. After about 2 minutes, both "lid birds" left the lid and continued with the others trying to jump out. None were interested in my cookies.



TOTAL DARKNESS. Will the four of them survive? Where are the others, and the mother and father?

May 4th 6:30 AM: ALL GONE! We only have egg shells left. It is a miracle that in less than two days (48 hours) they could all hatch, and be gone! We wonder if perhaps the first chick to leave the nest would have been fine, and the parents were just waiting for this to happen for all of them. Never will know how the other four got out of the nest, but I imagine that the mother or father had something to do with it.

DAC Editor: Here are some pertinent comments from Jeani Garrett, Director & Volunteer Quail Rehabilitator, Arizona Covey, about quail families:

Quail usually make their nests on the ground, under cactus, bougainvillea, rosemary, ferns, ivy, or any other dense plant that offers shelter and privacy...Not every nest site chosen by first-time quail parents is suitable, and sometimes their choice is dangerous or even fatal to the newly hatched chicks. Adult quail can fly to safety or to find food and water, but tiny, new chicks are confined to the ground for the first three weeks. The new little quail are hatched barely an inch tall, fuzzy, and running as soon as their fluff dries! Nearly everything will eat them, so they need to stay close to plants where they can hide. If you know where the quail nest is and want the quail to stay around, you can put game-bird starter under nearby bushes for the parents even before the chicks hatch. (Game-bird starter is a very fine mash, from a feed store. Pet stores probably won't have it, but Wild Bird stores usually will.) The quail will be used to the feed and water being available and keep the chicks nearby when they hatch. You should also put VERY shallow containers such as peanut butter jar lids, jelly jar lids, etc., either filled with water or with a hose dripping slowly into the lid, out for them in the same place as the feed. Put a layer of small pebbles in the lid so the chicks don't slip and get wet or drown. They can drown in anything deeper than a jar lid.

If the nest is in a flowerpot or planter, the dirt in the container needs to be within an inch of the rim so the babies can get out easily after they hatch. A fall of two or three feet to the ground shouldn't hurt them...You can make your yard a safer place for the little quail by making sure that the dirt is not more than an inch from the top of flower beds, tree wells, planters, or anything they may need to get out of to follow their parents. (Ed: Or make a little ramp for them, perhaps?)

In an emergency, chicks can be provided with game-bird/turkey starter, poppy seed (limited quantities), finely chopped broccoli tops or crushed hard-boiled egg in small quantities for them to peck at. Do not force-feed them.

