



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

### July 14, 2023



California Quail nestling in incubator.

### Califonira Quail

With their distinctive comma-shaped topknot, the California Quail is California's state bird. In June, we welcomed a flock of orphaned California Quail nestlings from Valencia. Beginning their journey in an incubator, they have now settled into a spacious enclosure outside in preparation for release.

As highly social birds, California Quails thrive in family groups in the wild. To foster their natural behaviors and facilitate socialization, we ensure that orphaned quails are housed together. This flocking behavior not only promotes bonding and communication but also imparts foraging efficiency as they learn from one another and share information about food availability—a vital skill for their successful transition back to the wild.

In the wild, mother quails guide their chicks to areas rich in food, actively foraging and pecking at the ground. By using their beaks to uncover seeds and insects hidden within the soil, they teach their chicks to emulate their actions. Gradually, the juvenile quails learn to peck and scratch nearby, honing their foraging skills. Vocalizations also play a crucial role in communication between mother quails and their chicks. The chicks learn to associate these sounds with food and investigate the surroundings when their mother calls.

To mimic these natural behaviors, our staff and volunteers replicate the feeding patterns of adult quails. By tapping a syringe on the enclosure floor, we help the quails associate the ground with food. As the nestlings grow, we gradually decrease our direct assistance, encouraging them to independently peck at the food on the ground and explore their natural instincts.

The nestlings are nourished with a diet that includes chick starter feed, mealworms and dried flies. This selection offers all necessary nutrients for their development and mimics their natural food sources.

Our flock of Juvenile California Quail are growing quickly and will soon be released. Their current outdoor enclosure allows the quail to have the opportunity to test their foraging skills and gain the necessary confidence to thrive on their own.



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During your summer bird-watching adventures, keep an eye out for these beautiful birds. They're likely to be spotted in sagebrush, woodlands, and foothill forests of California and the Northwest region. These adaptable birds are quite tolerant of human presence and can often be found in city parks and suburban gardens. When encountering California Quails, it's crucial to approach their habitats with a gentle and respectful manner. Move quietly to avoid startling them and give them the space they need to feel comfortable. You may hear their melodic clucking or playful peeping sounds.

By observing wildlife from a distance and minimizing disturbances, you increase the chances of enjoying their natural behaviors. Being a responsible bird watcher means prioritizing the well-being and preservation of California Quails and their habitats.