

# Nothing to Lose by Trying

## (2nd Chance for (4) Orange-chinned Parakeet Eggs)

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**A**pril 22, 2003 – Little did I know when I read message 38664 on the *Brotogeris* chat group on YahooGroups, what an adventure I would enter. Yvonne Gomez came onto the list to tell us about a problem she was having with her Orange-chinned Parakeets (*Brotogeris jugularis*). The Orange-chinned Parakeet is also known as the Tovi Parakeet, Brown-shouldered Parakeet, and Bee Bee Parakeet.

Our California valley weather had been very unstable and we had gone from warm weather to cold in a matter of hours. Yvonne had gone out to feed her animals and noticed that her proven Orange-chinned hen was fluffed up and not looking well at all. The Orange-chinned hen was taken to the vet and Yvonne left her not knowing what was wrong with the hen.

Yvonne thought she would take the opportunity of the pair of birds being out of the flight to give it a real good cleaning. When she took down the nest box she discovered eggs. I am not sure what happened, but Yvonne told us she broke two of the five eggs. She took the remaining three eggs into the house and put them in her turtle incubator set at 86 degrees F. It was then she told us of her situation and I volunteered to put the three eggs underneath my Canary-winged Parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*) whose eggs I knew were clear.

April 23, 2003 – Yvonne told us that the vet informed her that the hen

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was egg bound, had an enlarged liver and a bacterial infection. She also decided to take me up on the offer of fostering the 3 OC eggs under my Canary-winged Parakeets with no guarantees, but knew she had nothing to lose at this point.

April 24, 2003 – Today we were told of a horrible experience at the vet's office that would, however, have a happy ending. Yvonne had gone to pick up her little hen and somehow the bird escaped from the isolette unit it was in, flew out of the exam room,

through two opened doors into the waiting room where it crashed into a glass window. The bird fell onto the floor, eyes closed, limp and not moving. The vet quickly took the bird back into the examination room and put it on oxygen and started it on IV fluids.

Yvonne left the vets office not expecting to see her bird again. She called back to the vets office later that afternoon expecting to hear the worst, but she was pleasantly surprised to learn that when the bird flew into the window it moved the egg into a better position and the hen had laid the egg and was up, eating and fussing. The vet had Yvonne leave her there overnight to be watched at no additional charge. It was then I learned that I would be getting the fourth Orange-chinned eggs to care for.

April 25, 2003 – The hen went home from the vet's office and I met Yvonne and got the eggs from her around 1:15pm. I came home quickly and inspected the eggs and took pictures. I had Yvonne marked the eggs so we would know who was who when I added them into the Canary-winged nest box. When I got home I pulled all four of the Canary-winged's infertile eggs and replaced them with the Orange-chinned's eggs.

April 26, 2003 – I was very upset when I went out the next morning and discovered the Canary-winged hen had left the nest and eggs. She had been sit-



*This is the guy that started it all (with the enthusiastic help of the unfortunate hen, of course). He is a wild-caught Orange-chinned Parakeet male, a bit elderly, perhaps, but obviously vigorous, who is still perpetuating his species.*

ting almost 30 days and had now given up the nest. The eggs were cold and I was in a panic. I quickly started checking nest boxes and was relieved when I found another Canary-winged had recently laid four eggs. I added the Orange-chinned eggs to her four, giving that poor hen eight eggs to care for. I checked the eggs later that day and the hen was doing the job and the eggs were all warm to the touch.

May 3, 2003 – I went out to candle the Orange-chinned eggs today, it had been eight days. I was very excited to see that the last egg (laid in the vet's office) was fertile (could tell by the marking). I was also disappointed that none of the other Orange-chinned eggs showed fertile nor did any of the Canary-winged eggs, but decided to leave all the eggs a few more days. I was worried because the possibility three of the eggs had been left unincubated between 10 to 14 days before I got them.

May 5, 2003 – Today I mentioned to the Brotogeris group I was going out to candle the Orange-chinned eggs and if they didn't show fertile I was going to start pulling eggs. Gloria Balaban suggested I not be hasty as it had been her experience the Orange-chinned eggs can take an unusually long time to show fertile. I thought 10 days was long

enough, but I didn't have to make any decisions on what to do. When I went out and candled I was shocked to see all four Orange-chinned eggs were fertile! I could see four little beating hearts. Having now passed the first hurdle and having fertile eggs, I began on the next aspect of worrying. Would the eggs hatch? Did the Canary-winged hen have a mate? Would they feed the Orange-chinned babies if they did

hatch? There are always many things to worry about when breeding birds. It should be noted here the Canary-winged eggs are still showing clear.

May 10, 2003 – Today I pulled two of the clear Canary-winged eggs so the hen can focus a bit more on the fertile Orange-chinned eggs. Eggs are looking good and are all alive. I will pull the other clear Canary-winged eggs in a couple of days. This way the hen can just have the four little Orange-chinned eggs to care for. I predicted the first hatch to begin on May 20th.

May 14, 2003 – I kept checking the eggs and all continue to go well. My biggest concern was trying to figure out if the hen was a single or did she have a mate? This colony of Canary-winged are not tame and she will never allow me to catch her in the nest box. I am excited at this time because we are only about 7 days away from hatch day.

May 18, 2003 – I checked the eggs and they are drawing down all four are gearing up to hatch.



*Adult Orange-chinned Parakeets owned by Yvonne Gomez*

May 20, 2003 – I brought the whole nest box into the house today. I wanted to candle and inspect the Orange-chinned eggs closely. I could feel the chicks trying to pip out and I could see all the chicks moving inside the egg. We will have Orange-chinned babies soon. Today I spent time sitting at my computer desk with binoculars trying to figure out if there was a pair tending the eggs. I was delighted to learn after watching 45 minutes there was a male in on this venture. He sat guard on the perch outside the nest box. I was so relieved when I realize there was a *pair* of Canary-wingeds on the fostering job. I had not been able to observe the male before and I truly believe that the birds communicate to each other – he knows, as I do, that there will be babies soon.

May 21, 2003 – I got home from work and quickly went out to check the Orange-chinned eggs, I was hoping at least one had hatched by this time. You can only imagine how thrilled I was when I opened the box and saw three very pink babies and one of them clearly had food in its crop. I could hardly believe it and quickly took a few pictures and came in and shared the good news and photos with all the Broto people. I looked very closely at the 4th egg and I could feel it trying to pip and knew it too would hatch out by the 22nd. My daughter, Samantha, and I decided to go see a movie as I really needed a break. When we returned from the movies, I went back out to check on the chicks and I was truly floored when I found the 4th egg was hatched out during the 2½ hours I had been gone. I again took several photos and went on about my business of feeding the other birds and watering. It wasn't until almost an hour later when I came in to download the pictures did I see that there was blood in the nest box. I enlarged the photos and could see blood on the last chick that was much smaller than the other three as well as blood on the nest bedding and egg shell. I panicked

and went outside to see if there was an injury I did not see earlier. I checked all the chicks and there were no injuries. I left well enough alone and was hoping in the morning I would still have four live Orange-chinned chicks. It was now up to the Canary-winged foster parents to be in charge of the chicks care.



*The happy end result of fostering Orange-chinned eggs under Canary-winged parents. A healthy clutch of four babies. Although the runt in the lower left of the photo looks a bit yellow and puny, within four days he turned pink and caught up in size.*

May 22, 2003 – I went out with the fresh foods for the birds and while out in the flights I checked on the new Orange-chinned chicks, I was so reassured when I saw four live chicks in the nest box. I did however; notice one thing that caused me great concern. Not only was the last chick that hatched out much smaller than the others, but it now appeared to have a yellow skin tone as well. I have never seen this in a chick before and was really concerned. I wasn't sure I was viewing the chick in the best light and went back out a couple of hours later and took the chicks nest box out into the natural light and sure enough, the baby was yellow. I took pictures and reported back to the Brotogeris list hoping for some insight. People on

several lists offered up explanations and warned me I would most likely lose this chick. I decided to leave the chick with the foster birds and let whatever was going to happen to happen in the nest box. Smiles Germeau, whose is also an experienced breeder, agreed with my decision. This little chick's best chance for surviving would be with the clutchmates and being cared for by the foster birds.

May 23-26, 2003 – I continue to check on the Orange-chinned chicks several times a day and the foster birds are great. They keep the chicks well fed and they are growing rapidly. I have been watching the littlest chick improving in size and color and feel I have made the right decisions for the best outcome. The chick is only slightly different in color at this time.

May 26, 2003 – Today, I learned that the hen to these chicks has died. This was a sad reminder how fragile birds are and has added importance to my making sure these babies survive. They will be the last from this pair of birds and securing the genes is essential. Yvonne is having a necropsy done to reveal the cause of death. Was it trauma incurred when it flew into the window? Was the bacterial infection too severe to overcome? We won't know until Yvonne gets the necropsy report. This also may give insight if there was an infection that was passed onto the chick that is having problems now. These are just some of the daily challenges of the Brotogeris breeders. I hope to give a final update on these chicks that have a happy ending, but time will tell the tale. ❖

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