

Western Birds Project

How to make a quail call

A clothespin quail call is simple to make and accurately imitates the calls of both California valley quail and Gambel's quail. All you need to make this call is a wooden clothespin, electrical tape, and a No. 30, 31, or 32 rubber band. These rubber bands are 1/8th of an inch wide and approximately 1/16th of an inch thick. A No. 31 measures about 2 3/4-inches long when squashed flat on a ruler.

Step 1: Take the metal piece out of the clothespin so you have two pieces of wood.

Step 2: Take one of the pieces of wood and make four wraps of black electrical tape around the fat end of the wood. The call works best if you cover the slot where the metal piece was attached.

Step 3: Take four wraps of electrical tape around the skinny end of the same piece of wood. Make sure the tape is smooth on the flat side of the wood as you wrap the tape on. The beauty of electrical tape is that it's pretty stretchy and makes this easy.

Step 4: Take the rubber band and place it around the taped wood length-wise. Make sure the rubber band is centered along the flat side of the wood. With a rubber band that is too long for the wood, you may end up with a loop on the outside of the call.

Step 5: Take the other piece of wood and place the flat side of this wood against the flat side of the taped piece of wood so the rubber band is trapped between the two flat pieces of clothespin. Now pinch the two pieces of wood together and tightly tape them together at one end. I like to keep the two fat ends of the wood together for this process. Try to keep the flat insides of the two pieces of wood parallel to each other. The call is effectively done at this point.

Step 6: Blow through the slit between the two pieces across the rubber band. You can tune the call by applying different pressure with your fingers to the un-taped end of the call. You can leave the call this way or tape the skinny end of the call together once you determine the correct pressure for the sound you like, effectively locking it in at this pitch. The tighter you pinch the call, the higher the pitch.

The rubber band functions as the reed and makes a very life-like imitation of the quail. Don't expect perfection with your first call. Make several. You will get the hang of it quickly. Some of these calls sound really outstanding. The beauty of this call is that you can make about 50 of them for less than \$5, so replacements are very cheap. This is a great kids' project. —Jim Matthews

