




She tells me she hasn't seen an egg in three weeks. "They'll suddenly decide to go off and lay somewhere else, and then I can't find the eggs." These eggs, with their bright orange yolks, are highly coveted, and she gives them away to friends and neighbors. She explains, "They lay about four a week. They don't lay every 24 hours, but instead something like 31, so it totals around 265 eggs a year. Then they don't lay if it's too hot, too cold, too windy, and when finally they do lay an egg, they're quite vocal about it. They'll sing, and it's always the same old song, 'I'm so great, I'm so great.'"

She says, "I have to tell them that not all chickens live like this. I get them when they are young, like 48 hours old. It's best to bring them in as a flock as it's hard for them to bond. I have several generations, and I monitor them and make sure they get along. If they fight, I never scold or punish them. I just distract them."

Diane confesses to being "completely solar powered" in her own sleep habits, which means, as she explains, "I kind of go to bed with the chickens. They put themselves to bed every night. They just head to the coop at sunset and I always count them before I turn in."

As we talk, Gracie (the ringleader), Madame Dubury, Buffo, Pock-Eye and Cecilia have all strutted by. She tells me that they are well behaved although notes, "They'll occasionally go in and lay an egg on my bed, and I once found Mrs. Speckles asleep there." She continues, "Chickens are very sweet, and I like taking care of them, living outside and being with them." She pauses, and then adds, "I can't imagine life without them."



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