

Wildlife Information

(From The Wildlife Center of Virginia)

P.O. Box 1557 - Waynesboro, VA 22980 - 540.942.WILD - Fax 540.943.9453 web site –
www.wildlifecenter.org

If you find a Baby Bird

Step #1: Prevention

The best baby bird rehabilitation is prevention. Educate your friends, family, neighbors, and yourselves about the fledgling process. It is normal for birds at fledgling to be on the ground unable to fly. Birds need several days up to four weeks, depending on their species, to learn how to fly around and forage for food. One or more parent will feed them during this period. To avoid predation, know where nesting sites are located and keep cats and dogs indoors around the time you think the birds will fledge. The same goes for children who, through natural curiosity, can harm the birds. Ask neighbors to take responsibility for their pets and children as well.

Step #2: Return Uninjured Birds to the Nest

Any **fully feathered** baby bird found on the ground, seemingly unable to fly, is probably just fledging. If it appears to be uninjured, leave the area, and do your best to keep pets and children away from the bird. The parent(s) will not feed the youngster when people are around.

An uninjured bird found on the ground **with little or no feathers** needs to be returned to the nest. Look around in trees and bushes to see if you can locate the nest. Correct identification of the nestling or of the parents will help locate the nest (i.e. bluebirds are box or cavity nesters, morning doves build basket nests on horizontal branches or in a tree fork). If you locate the nest, simply put the bird back.

If the nest is unreachable, construct a substitute nest of similar size and shape (margarine tubs with drain holes punched in the bottom and filled with grass make fine substitute nests) and securely attach it as close as possible to the original nest site. The parents will not be frightened off by your "scent" and will return to feed the baby if it calls for food. If you want to be sure the parent(s) will continue to feed the baby, watch the baby from a safe distance, preferably indoors. Do not be alarmed if you don't see the female return. Typically the male parent will continue to feed the youngsters if the female parent leaves to start another brood.

If you can't find the nest, construct a substitute nest in the place where the nestling was found. Watch from indoors to see if a parent returns (be patient, it may not happen immediately). If the nest is not visited by a parent for more than half a day, contact a licensed rehabilitator.

Step #3: For Injured Birds

Any bird that has broken bones, bleeding, deformity, cat bites, or other puncture wounds, maggots or warbles, tilting head, or large bubbles under the skin needs to be taken to your nearest wildlife veterinarian or wildlife hospital for diagnosis and treatment. Never attempt to treat or raise a baby bird on your own. Despite your best efforts, most hand-raised birds will die.

For further information about these or other animals, please contact The Wildlife Center of Virginia at (540) 942-9453.

NOTE: Raising a wild animal in captivity is illegal unless you have a state permit. For information on how you can become a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, contact The WCV or The VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.