



Helping Baby Birds

During the Spring we receive many calls regarding young birds that have fallen from the nest.

Some are in genuine need of our help, like the baby green herons whose nest was destroyed when a tree was felled and parents failed to find the makeshift nest.

Others are baby birds that you may think need help, but don't always need our well-meaning 'help' – like the baby Barred Owl that was admitted. It was a fledgling and was spending time on the ground learning how to fly, while his parents still cared for him. Instead he had to learn in how rehab flight cage.

Follow the guidelines below to determine whether or not a young birds needs our help:

If you find a baby bird that has feathers, it's eyes are open and it is able to move away from you:

- The best thing to do is leave it alone! The parents will find it and continue to take care of it wherever it is. Baby birds do not leave the nest knowing how to fly. They initially fall out of the nest, and start clinging to branches or brush. They stay close to the ground for about 1-2 weeks, and start flying with short hops from branch to branch. The hops gradually get longer, until the bird eventually flies.

If the bird is in immediate danger of being attacked by a cat or dog:

- When possible, remove the cat or dog from the area until the bird is able to fly (1-2 weeks).
- Put the bird in a nearby bush, shrub or tree limb, out of harm's way. Most birds have a poor sense of smell, and the parents will not abandon a baby bird touched by humans.
- Don't stay in the immediate vicinity of the bird – the parents are probably watching and will not approach if you stay around.

If you find a baby bird with little or no feathers and you know where the nest is:

- Return the bird to its nest.

If the nest is destroyed, cannot be found, or cannot be reached:

- You can make one using a small basket or margarine container. Punch holes in the bottom and line the container with paper towel (not with grass, as moisture in the grass can cause birds to become too cold). Secure the 'nest' with duct tape in a branch fork near the old nest. The parents will find it. Check out our blog about a makeshift basketball net nest for a family of Cooper's Hawks last year: (link: <http://world-bird-sanctuary.blogspot.com/2010/08/sprungs-spring-baby-hawks-from-certain.html>)

If you are certain the bird is an orphan:

- When you are certain the parents have been killed, prepare to transport the bird to a rehabilitation facility. Carefully place the baby bird in a small open container lined with paper towel, and place both in a cardboard box

- Do not attempt to feed or water an orphaned bird. A bird's diet is very particular and they have a feeding schedule that must be followed.

If you are tempted to keep the baby bird:

- **DON'T.** Migratory birds, including songbirds, are protected under federal law. Possession of a bird, its nest or eggs without a permit is illegal.

Which rehab facility?

The World Bird Sanctuary Kathryn G. Favre Wildlife Hospital admits 300-400 birds per year. We are unable to do pick-ups or rescues due to staffing issues. We are open to accept birds from 8am to 5pm every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas Days. We accept all birds of prey (hawks, owls, eagles, vultures, falcons etc.) as well as herons, pelicans and swans. We do not accept songbirds.

If you find a songbird – Cardinal, Bluebird, Bluejay etc. – you can call Wild Bird Rehab at 314-426-6400.

As always, if you are in any doubt and need further guidance, please call our wildlife hospital at 636-861-1392 for more information or advice.