

# Are You A Birdnapper?

## You Found A Baby Bird On The Ground...Now What?

### **Parent birds will feed their babies after you have touched them.**

Birds have a poor sense of smell and the parents won't know that you have touched their babies. They will even be foster parents for an abandoned baby of the same species and age as their own young.

### **Parent birds will search for their babies even after 24-48 hours of absence.**

Most birds have their own territories. Even if the nest and babies are gone, the parents remain in their home territory, waiting to welcome their babies home.

### **Birds only need to be rescued if they are:**

Injured, cat caught, icy cold, naked, or orphaned.

### **Symptoms of an Injury or Illness:**

Falling over on side  
Unable to flutter wings  
Weak or shivering  
Attacked by a cat or dog

Wing tweaked upward  
Wings drooping  
Feathers fluffed  
Bleeding



### **Abandoned:**

**Watch for the parents...** observe the baby bird continuously for 60-90 minutes from a distance of 50 feet. Watch carefully; the parents fly in and out quickly.

### **If you have the bird in a box, check the feces...**

- Clear with white poop (or green bile) indicates a baby bird is not being fed, and is likely abandoned.
- Color in the poop indicates that the parents are feeding the baby, and the bird should be put back where found.

**Fallen Babies:** Naked and pin-feathered birds should be kept warm while trying to locate the nest. The babies will get chilled quickly. (See Temporary Care Instructions)

**An entire nest** of birds can be placed in a small tissue-filled wicker basket or butter tub with drainage holes in the bottom. Nail to the tree in a safe location from crows and hawks. Be sure that a branch shades them from sunburn.

**One single baby must be returned to the original nest with his siblings.** The parents will only sit on and feed the babies in one nest. If the nestling cannot be returned, call a wildlife rehabilitator.

**Fledglings:** These birds have feathers and short tails, and can perch, hop or walk. They are learning to fly (a process that may take two weeks). They should be left alone to practice hopping and fluttering from low shrub branches to the ground. The parents are close by, and

continue to feed the babies until they learn to fly and eat on their own. Parents will guide the fledglings into the bushes at night to hide from predators.

### **Safe Return of the Fledgling:**

- *Keep pets and children* indoors so that the parents will return to the baby.
- If a bird can perch on your finger, place him on a branch in a bush near the area you found him.
- If you found him in a high traffic area, move him to a safe area under the cover of bushes.
- Parents communicate with their young by a series of voice calls. They are able to locate their babies and move them where they wish.
- **At a distance**, (indoors is best) watch continuously for 1 hour for the parents to return. They fly in and out very quickly. If the parents don't return, call a wildlife rehabilitator.

### **Hummingbird Tips**

The young birds secure themselves to the nest by weaving their tiny toes around the nest fabric. So firm is their hold that if lifted from the nest, most often the legs are left behind. Never remove them from the nest.

If you find an injured or orphaned hummingbird on the ground, scoop up what he is sitting on with him and place him on crumpled tissue paper in a shoebox with holes in the lid. Always use tissue or paper towels, NOT cloth- his feet may become entangled in the cloth. (See Temporary Care Instructions for All Birds)

Call a wildlife rehabilitator ASAP. Hummingbirds will die within 4 hours if not fed. Hummingbird babies that are fed sugar water or Hummingbird nectar for more than 24 hours may develop crippling deformities.

### **Temporary Care Instructions for All Birds...**

- 1) NO** food or water
- 2)** Keep the bird warm. (Tissue filled shoebox or other small box with holes in lid. Place on a heating pad on "**LOW**".)
- 3)** Keep bird in a dark, quiet place.
- 4)** Leave the bird alone; don't handle or bother it.
- 5)** Keep children and pets away.
- 6)** Call a wildlife rehabilitator

### **Raising an Orphaned Bird**

*Keeping a native wild bird in the State of California is against the law if you don't have a permit, even if you plan to release the bird.*

Raising an orphaned bird takes from four to eight weeks. Naked and pin-feathered nestlings must be fed every 20-30 minutes. The feeding schedule then extends to 45 minutes and so on. The baby birds are fed from 7am to 8pm for four to six weeks. When they become self-feeding, they are provided with a natural diet for that specific species (grains, etc. for seed eaters; mealworms, fruit and berries for the insect and fruit eaters). After being self-feeding for one week, they are placed in an outdoor aviary for two weeks to fly and compete with others.

**DON'T BE A BIRDNAPPER! EDUCATE YOUR CHILDREN, NEIGHBORS, AND FRIENDS NOT TO PICK UP HEALTHY BABY BIRDS. LEAVE THEM WITH THEIR PARENTS... THEY RAISE THEM BEST!**

Courtesy of **Songbird Care and Education**

Vicki Andersen, Susan DiGregorio, and Claudia Vilensky