

## I found a baby bird, what should I do?

Many people report finding orphan birds of various types. In many cases these are fledglings who purposefully left the nest. Some bird species spend an entire week living on the ground as they learn to fly! It is a critical time period for them to learn survival skills. Although they are not fully flighted yet, they are still cared for by their parents during this time.

If you find one of these in your yard, and it is not in immediate danger, it is usually best to leave it be. Observe it from a very far distance away for several hours to see if it is being tended by its parents. If a fledgling is in a dangerous area, move it to a nearby shrub where the parents can still find it.

Sometimes if a baby has blown out of a nest and is obviously too young to be fledged, you may be able to locate the nest and place the baby back inside. If the nest has been destroyed, try substituting a makeshift nest made from a small box or basket in the place where you think the nest was, and then wait patiently from a far distance. It may take several hours for the parents to feel it is safe to re-approach, especially after a nest-destroying level of disturbance. Returning a baby bird to the nest is ALWAYS the best choice before humans take on the responsibility of trying to raise it. No one can teach survival skills nor care for a baby bird nearly as well as a mother bird.

**ALL** migratory birds are protected by federal and state laws. It is illegal to keep these birds without proper permits.

Doing what you feel is right, despite your best intentions, does not exempt you from the repercussions of breaking the law. Sending uninjured, healthy baby birds to a wildlife rehabilitator to raise makes as little sense as sending healthy baby humans to a hospital to raise. If you truly have a bird that needs to be cared for, your first course of action should be to contact the Idaho State Department of Fish & Game. The Department of Fish and Game will transfer the bird to a permitted wildlife rehabilitator. Wild birds are not suited to life as cage birds or pets. Once mature, they usually hurt themselves trying to escape their confines, damaging their feathers, wings, or beak. Wildlife rehabilitators are not pet keepers. Their goal is to release the bird back to the wild as soon as the bird is able to fend for itself.

The only exceptions to the law are house sparrows, starlings, and Eurasian collard doves. Those are non-native, exotic invasive species causing harm to native species, and thus do not fall under the Migratory Bird Act.

To keep a bird alive until it can be transferred to the appropriate party, it is important to understand what type of bird you have. Different species have different needs. A baby robin, starling, or sparrow may be fed soaked dog food mixed with some bread and apple sauce. If you have found a baby owl or hawk it must be fed small pieces of raw meat. Do NOT use hamburger or any other ground meat. Ideally, you would feed a baby raptor a food item that would be naturally eaten by the species, such as a rat, mouse, or sparrow. In the absence of this, chicken hearts will work for a short period of time. However, these birds have high calcium requirements, and meat without bone and fur will eventually cause serious crippling bone deformation. **Get the bird to a licensed rehabilitator as soon as possible!**

Can't the zoo take the baby bird? Regrettably, no we cannot. Similarly, we are not able to take any other orphaned animals either. We are a licensed USDA facility. Caring for wildlife would violate our quarantine regulations. The best thing for you to do is call your local Department of Fish and Game:

**Idaho State Fish and Game - Upper Snake Region**

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