

ARE YOU A BIRDNAPPER?

You Found a Baby Bird on the Ground....

Now What?



Jasper County Conservation Board
115 N. 2nd Ave. E.
Newton, IA 50208

www.co.jasper.ia.us/conservation

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. Additionally, there is no danger to you from picking up a baby bird and returning it to the nest, and no need to be afraid to do this.

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. Once you have returned the babies to their nest, or created a new nest for them and replaced the babies, the parents will start right back in caring for them where they left off before disaster struck, such as nest blown down in the wind.

Birds only need to be rescued if they are: injured, cat caught, icy cold, naked, orphaned or abandoned.

Determining that a baby is orphaned can be tricky, and many people step in to rescue what they believe to be an orphaned bird when in fact it is not. People often believe the parents are not feeding a baby when it is simply a matter of them not seeing the parent coming in to feed, as this is usually done very quickly, since a parent bird does not want to attract the attention of a predator to the location of the nest. They will quickly fly in, poke the food down the baby's throat and fly back out in a matter of seconds. **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 the babies aren't crying, you can assume they are being fed. **NOTE: even if one parent bird has been killed, there is no need to rescue the babies, since the other parent will take over feeding the babies.**

SYMPTOMS OF AN INJURY OR ILLNESS

- Falling over on side
- Wings drooping
- Attacked by a cat/dog
- Wing tweaked upward
- Weak or shivering
- Bleeding
- Unable to flutter wings
- Feathers fluffed

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 you found it.

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 for All Birds.*

RE-NESTING: 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 back near the original location. One single nestling 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 the bird 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.

TEMPORARY CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL BIRDS

- **NO** food or water.
- Keep the bird warm by placing him in a tissue-filled shoebox or other small box with holes in lid. Or, place the bird on a heating pad set on **LOW**.
- Keep bird in a dark, quiet place.
- Leave the bird alone; don't handle or bother it.
- Keep children and pets away.
- Call a wildlife rehabilitator.

RAISING AN ORPHANED BIRD

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

Captive wild animals often are injured unintentionally by human handling and care. Please remember that caring for birds requires experience, expertise, dedication, time, and money. Raising an orphaned bird takes from four to eight weeks. Naked and pin-feathered nestlings must be fed every 20-30 minutes. A licensed wildlife rehabilitator will feed the baby birds every day 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 before being released back into the wild.