

Baby Birds

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Many baby birds leave their nest (voluntarily) before they can fly. They flutter on the ground as they go through the "fledgling" stage and practice short hops and flights in bushes and low tree branches. Their parents feed them when they cry from their ground location. They are commonly seen in bushes, on branches or hopping around in the open.

Sometimes, well meaning humans find these babies and mistake them for abandoned chicks. They will usually not see the parents (or be able to identify them), but the parents live in that space. They have bred there, made their nest, laid & incubated eggs and reared young. It is their home. It is also likely that the parents were born in the place themselves. *(most animals tend to live or return to a nest/den space near where they themselves were born)*. In short, the parents do not leave. Both bird parents generally feed the babies (hummingbirds are one exception where only females feed the young). Sometimes, harm may find one parent (usually cats), but the other survives to care for and feed the young.

80%-90% of "orphan" baby birds are actually accidental kidnappings where one or both parents are feeding the young ones and are perching nearby, or they are out looking for more bugs! These kidnapped babies can be easily distinguished from birds in real trouble.

Baby birds are healthy and do not need to be rescued in these situations:

- 1) *They have no obvious injury; - no blood, wings and legs are in the correct position.*
- 2) *They are alert and vocal (crying for food or screaming when you grab them)*
- 3) *They are fat, round & their feathers look fluffy and clean (if you move abdominal feathers aside, you can actually see orange colored fat storage on their sides and near the rib cage).*
- 4) *They are covered in feathers. These are "fledglings". They have left the nest and will hop on the ground for 2-3 days until they fly. They can hop and flutter for short flights of about 2ft. in the air but they are not capable of full flight yet.*

Note that feathers do not grow everywhere. There are bare spots on the abdomen, near the neck and under wings. Feathers grow in patterns and cover these areas.

- 5) *They will seem tame - unafraid of predators (you).*

Birds have no sense of smell and they will not abandon their young if they are touched. Babies in strange or dangerous places (the street, gutters, etc.) can be safely moved to a better spot. In fact, fledglings actually travel around while they are in this stage and

parents locate them when they chirp. They can even be moved from a front yard to the back or in the yard next door if they are threatened. As long as they are within earshot of the parents, they will be found and cared for. Putting them back in a nest at this stage is futile. They will be back on the ground before you are!

Mother and Father know best! Baby birds should always be left with their parents whenever possible. They should be rescued ONLY when signs of injury or distress are seen and your help is really needed.

A rescue should be done under these circumstances:

- 1) *Obvious signs of injury; a leg or wing dragging, displaced, or not working*
- 2) *The baby has blood on it from wounds*
- 3) *The baby looks uninjured but you got it from a cat or dog*
- 4) *The bird is infested with ants, bugs, or other crawlies*
- 6) *It smells bad*
- 7) *It is lethargic, hangs its head, unresponsive, weak*
- 8) *Acting strangely (convulsions, head twisting)*
- 9) *Eyes or nostrils have "growths" or discharge*
- 10) *Baby bird is a hatchling (tiny, featherless) and cannot be put back into the nest. **

*If hatchling has purple or green abdomen (bruising), it is injured and should be rescued, not returned.

In the event that you rescue a baby bird under the above circumstances, we can be reached via the information below. All native (wild) birds are protected under State and Federal wildlife protection laws. It is unlawful to keep any protected species without the proper permits. Pacific Wildlife Project is a State and Federally licensed wildlife rehabilitation facility. All animals are returned to the wild after recovery.

Pacific Wildlife Project

<http://www.pacificwildlife.org>
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For Urgent Help, click on the Urgent Help button on our home page.
(949) 831-1178 Recorded Information
(949) 440-6247 VOX