

Found a Baby Crow?

Crows are very intelligent and live in family units where all members of the extended family care for all the babies born within the unit. They are also protective of all the other crows in the family pod. They readily accept other adult and baby crows into the group. Crows visit their aging parents many years after they have left the nest.

Baby crows hop out of their nest as they become feathered, and before they can fly. At that point, they can hop and flutter to get up to short landings and use their feet to "climb" to higher roosts. They spend a lot of time in low branches and on the ground during this stage of development (known as the fledgling stage), and the family members come down to feed the young ones when they cry. Likewise, crows also respond to "grounded" adults; they try to coax them to return to their higher lofts by cawing and diving at the grounded bird. This activity is frequently misinterpreted by humans as attacks on the helpless bird.

The babies have blue eyes that turn to brown as they become juveniles. Both have yellow corners at their bill and are bright red inside the mouths, while adult mouths are black inside and outside. Juveniles are fully feathered and they are clumsy walkers (they look intoxicated!). They often fall from side to side when they try to walk around. They have wing feathers that are grown in but may still have some quill shafts on them near the point where the feathers attach to the wing. Well-meaning humans commonly "rescue" these birds thinking that they are injured.

The proper course of action in this case is to leave the baby in the family. It is important that they are with the family unit to learn foraging and predator avoidance behaviors. Their socialization within the crow family is also critical to their survival. As older fledglings (juveniles), they will frequently refuse food from humans and will actually starve themselves to death as they reject even the most aggressive feeding techniques.

Good News: Crows are so social and protective of their species, that they will accept a baby not even related to their family. Healthy crow fledglings can be introduced to ANY crow family pod and will be accepted, fed, and protected as one of their own (we should be so lucky).

Ideally, you should return the baby to the family of origin. Alternately, you can find another established pod of crows. To return a baby to its family or to "foster" it into a new family, follow these procedures: The best arrival time at the scene is early or late morning. The birds are active then, and you will want the baby to have the full day to get established and to get the number of feedings that it should have before dark. When you arrive at the site, hold the bird's body gently in your hands leaving the wings free. Raise and lower the bird in your hands to encourage it to flap the wings. This will usually cause the baby to vocalize and will attract the attention of resident crows. The resident crows

will respond right away to the bird's cries and come down to investigate. When you have the attention of the family, toss the baby into a tall thicket or into a tree. They usually land sideways and hang by one leg as if they are stranded. Don't panic. They right themselves in a few minutes and will shortly communicate with the other crows. The family will adopt the baby and all will be well.

This reintroduction should be done as soon as possible to avoid long periods of food fasting and to avoid bonding to humans (deadly to wild bird survival).

If there is an obvious injury present, i.e. bloody wounds, leg or wing that are not in the right position (hanging wings and wobbly legs are normal) or there is a known injury (dogs, cars, etc.) then a rescue should be done. If the baby is naked, with no feathers or has very sparse feathers, it should be rescued.

Note: It is very rare for a cat to attack a crow.

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