

## Basic information on the Care and Rescue of Baby Wild Birds

### PLAN A

First determine if the baby bird needs **YOUR** help. If the bird is injured go to "Plan C". An adolescent bird (fledgling) may be learning to fly and will spend some time on the ground normally. Simply keep pets (i.e. dogs and cats) confined for the several days the bird needs to master flight.

If the baby is naked or has few feathers it will be very difficult for you to raise. The baby can be aided by creating an artificial nest to house it while the parents continue to care for it. You can use an old hanging flower basket with the bottom saucer removed, a bucket with holes in the bottom, or an old wicker basket with a handle. Make a pine straw nest in it, put the baby in, and hang it in a shady spot as close to where it was found as possible. The parents will not be able to carry it back to the original nest, but they should find it and continue to feed it even though humans have touched it.

If the baby can stand well and has numerous feathers it can be placed on the limb of a large bush or tree out of the reach of predators. **All babies can be returned to their parents within 24-48 hours and they'll be accepted back.** Watch from a distance to determine if it is being fed. Most birds (except for doves, pigeons, hawks, and owls) will be approached by parents within several hours if they are not orphaned.

Doves are gray babies with narrow dark gray beaks. Hawks and owls have hooked beaks (go directly to "Plan C"). Their parents may only come to them 2 or 3 times in a 24 hour period and owls will feed them only at night. Check them the next day. If they are strong, it is likely they are being cared for. If the bird is not cared for - go to "Plan B".

### Plan B

Most orphaned birds will be chilled and need to be warmed with a heating pad or light bulb before feeding. Put the baby in a cardboard box and put the heat source (95°F) on one side of the box so the bird can move away from it if it starts to overheat. Very tiny babies must be watched closely since they can't move away on their own. Lay a thermometer next to the baby so you can monitor the temperature. The bird must feel warm to the touch in order to properly digest food.



A weak baby can be given a rehydration solution before solid food. Pedialyte®, Gatorade®, or a homemade formula of 1 quart warm water, 1 teaspoon salt, and 3 tablespoons of sugar can be offered a drop at a time on the tip of the beak every 10 to 15 minutes until stronger. If it doesn't want it, the baby will shake its head.

Most baby birds can be fed for several days with water-softened monkey biscuits or any water softened DRY dog or cat food as a temporary food substitute. Hawk and owl babies can only be fed raw lean strips of beef for a short time. Insect eaters like purple martins and chimney swifts need crickets or raw lean pieces of beef.

Doves can be fed baby cereal mixed with enough water to liquefy it and served in a small container (even better: a baby bird handfeeding formula such as Zupreem or Kaytee). The rubber bulb off of an eyedropper will work fine. Dip the tip of dove's beak in cereal every hour until it gets the idea and drinks.

Small, naked babies must be fed every 15 minutes, while older babies with feathers may go several hours between meals. Dove, pigeons, hawks, and owls may only eat 3-4 times a day. Continue offering food at each meal until baby loses interest.

Remember, the whole point of caring for these animals is their eventual release back to the wild!

### PLAN C

Contact the Environmental Studies Center (221-5000) as soon as possible for important information concerning the baby. The Center is open weekdays 8:00 am. - 4:30 pm. .

**Please Note:** The information in this handout is meant to provide basic information only.

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