

“What to Do If You Find a Baby Bird”

Most people are perplexed at that very question. Thinking the baby bird is abandoned, well-meaning humans will remove the bird when in actuality, it should be left on the ground, or in some cases returned to the nest.

“The Exception”

- If the bird is in imminent danger, i.e., a cat or a dog is nearby, or if there is a possibility the bird could get hit by a car, then it is in need of rescuing. In that situation, the best thing to do is pick up the bird, place it in a box with plenty of ventilation and call SOS for further instructions.

“Different Scenarios”

- You may come upon a bird that is a *hatchling* or a *nestling* on the ground with or without the nest. Both of these stages are still dependent on its mother for warmth and food.
- It may be a *fledgling*, still being fed by its mother and may be hopping on the ground.
- The bird could have apparent injuries.

“You Have This Bird On the Ground, Now What?”

- If the bird is a *hatchling* (freshly hatched, no feathers) or a *nestling* (fuzzy, few feathers) and shows no signs of injuries, it is best for the bird to be returned to its nest. *Before* doing so, check the baby bird for warmth. If you find it is cold, you can gently hold the bird in your hands to increase the bird’s body temperature. Heat is imperative for its survival.
- Look for its mother. She will be watching over her baby and you! If you spot her, place the nest and the baby bird back into a nearby tree. If there is *no* nest, you may substitute one for a berry basket (the kind berries come in) or an empty margarine container (with holes poked at the bottom for drainage). Place *dried leaves or pine needles* in the “nest” and make an indentation in the middle; gently place the baby bird into this “nest” and into a tree. Next, observe the mother’s behavior from a distance. Normally, she will fly down and tend to her baby; this would be the best outcome.
- A *fledgling* (with most of its feathers, frequently hops on the ground) is often seen on the ground near bushes or tall grass. It leaves the nest as part of the weaning process by the mother, or may hop out to “test its wings”; all part of the fledging process. Usually, the mother remains in the area, feeding and watching over it. Again, observe the mother’s behavior to see if she is in the area tending to her baby. This may take a half hour, so patience is required. If indeed the mother is watching it and feeding it, leave it be.
- The fledging process is all part of nature’s way in strengthening its wings, learning to fly and survive on its own. The best thing is not to interfere with this process.
- If after observing the area and you do not see the mother, then do call Save Our Seabirds for further instructions.

“Myth Dispelled”

- It is not true that once you handle a baby bird, the mother no longer wants to care for it. Totally a myth! Unless it is a vulture, birds do not have a strong sense of smell. Therefore, it would be perfectly alright to place the baby bird back into its nest.

“Should You Give It Food and Water?”

- It is best not to give the baby bird any food or water. Each bird has a specific diet and it is best to leave feeding the bird to a rehabilitator, as he/she will know exactly what it needs. There is also a chance that the bird will aspirate if it is given food or water.

“How Do You Determine If It Needs To Be Brought To Save Our Seabirds?”

- If you do not see the mother, or the parents are known to be dead, then do bring the baby bird to Save Our Seabirds. If you are unable to transport the bird, please call (refer to the phone number below). You may use a box with plenty of ventilation for transport.
- If the bird is in imminent danger as previously described.
- Lastly, if it is clear that the bird suffered injuries.

The overriding goal is that we all want the best care for this baby bird. Even in the most capable hands, rehabilitators cannot do the job of a baby bird’s mother! Consequently, if you find a baby bird, please do all you can to leave it on the ground or place the bird back into its nest. Save Our Seabirds can be reached at 941-388-3010.

Don't be a birdnapper! Please observe the bird before you handle it.

