



Birds: When the nest is intact, warm the baby birds carefully in the hands (wearing thin, plastic gloves) and return them to the nest. Watch from a distance to see if the parents return. If the parents do not return in two hours, or by dusk, retrieve the babies, put them in a box in a warm, dark, quiet place, and call WRL. To repair a damaged nest, carefully retie the nest with string or wire, then replace the young in it. Do not leave loops, tangles, or sharp points that could injure parents or nestlings. To replace a nest, make a substitute nest from a berry basket, plastic plant pot with drainage holes (a hanging basket is good), wooden or straw basket. Even a craft store bird's nest works. Line it with nest debris, leaves or pine needles; do not use grass or paper which will get wet and mildew. If the nest can't be replaced in the original spot, select a place as close as possible. Hang, if possible, or use duct tape to attach. Be sure it has some protection from direct sun (filtered is okay), wind, rain and is out of the reach of cats and children. After the nest is replaced, it should be carefully monitored from a distance for two hours to see whether the parents return. If the parents do not return, call the WRL hotline at 703-440-0800



Does This Animal Need Help?

Sometimes it's hard to know what to do when you find an injured animal. When in doubt, please call the Wildlife Assistance Hotline: 703-440-0800

Wildlife Rescue League



**Contact Us:
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A guide to when to leave an animal alone, when the animal should be rescued, and what steps to take if it needs rescuing.



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Leave the animal alone:

Cottontails: Cottontails mature and are on their own at a very young age. A bunny that is fully furred, has its eyes open, its ears and tail up, and is at least the size of a tennis ball should be left alone. If it is in an inappropriate location, such as on the sidewalk or street, move it under a shrub.

Fawns: A doe will leave a fawn unattended all day, joining it only at dawn and dusk. A fawn should be left alone unless there is a dead doe nearby or the fawn is crying, begging or showing other signs of distress or sickness.

Squirrels: A squirrel that is furred, has a tail that curves up and can sit up and walk should be left alone unless it shows signs of weakness. These squirrels are taking learning excursions from the nest but still under a parent's care.

Raccoons: Baby raccoons open their eyes at about three weeks of age, and begin traveling with their mother at eight to nine weeks. They are not fully weaned until four months, so a baby raccoon alone should be cause for alarm. Before rescuing it, however, give mom a chance to retrieve it. Since raccoons are nocturnal, leave the baby in the area where seen overnight. If it is still there in the morning, it will need help.

Foxes: Fox kits will play outside the den while mom watches from a distance. As long as the kit appears healthy, stay away. Seeing foxes during the day does not mean they are rabid. If kits, they may be playing and exploring; if adults, they may be looking for food or even a new home if theirs was destroyed due to construction, a flood or other reason.

Turtles: Female turtles will dig a hole in the ground, lay their eggs and move on. The turtles will hatch fully able to survive on their own. Leave baby turtles alone. If you see a turtle in an inappropriate location, such as crossing the street, stop your car (if it is safe to do so), pick up the turtle and move it to the side of the road where it was headed. Do not place it back where it came from, because it will only start to cross the road again.

Birds: As baby birds get older, their parents spend less and less time with them. The babies will hunker down when the parents are not around. If the babies seem healthy, watch the nest for at least 30 minutes without taking your eyes off it. If the parents have not come back, the birds may need help. Another way to check whether the babies are being cared for is to look in the nest. In many species, the babies deposit fecal sacs that the parents carry out throughout the day. If the nest is clean, the parents have been there.

Birds on the ground: A fledgling is an adolescent bird that is on the ground for a few days as it learns to feed itself, recognize predators, and builds the strength to fly. You can recognize a fledgling by a short tail on a fully feathered body. If the bird appears healthy and energetic and hops away when you approach it, leave it alone. The parents are generally flying overhead and may even attack you as you approach their baby. Keep pets out of the area for a few days to allow the bird to learn how to fly and get off the ground. Birds at this age do not do well in rehabilitation, so please allow every chance for their parents to care for them.



An animal needs help if it . . .

- Shows signs of flies, worms or maggots, which look like grains of rice;
- Was caught by a cat or dog, even if it seems healthy;
- Has an open wound with bleeding or swelling;
- Is a baby and the parents are known dead or separated and cannot be united;
- Suffered a severe trauma such as being hit by a car or falling from a high nest;
- Is very cold, thin or weak;
- Is on the ground unable to move;
- Is not fully furred or feathered;



Ways to help

Squirrels: Sometimes baby squirrels fall or are blown out of nests or are dropped as the mother is moving her nest; sometimes a whole nest is blown down during high winds. If you find baby squirrels on the ground that are warm, furred and uninjured, give mom up to 15 minutes to retrieve them. Watch from inside the house. A mother will not show herself if she can detect anyone's presence within a fairly wide radius. If the babies are not retrieved after 15 minutes, call the WRL Wildlife Assistance Hotline at 703-440-0800

Rabbits: A mother rabbit leaves the nest for long periods of time and feeds babies only twice a day, generally around dusk and dawn. Nests are rarely abandoned, but she will stay away if humans or animals are around too much. It is important that rabbits be re-nested (using gloves) whenever possible and the mother be given a chance to tend the babies. You can check whether the babies are being cared for by placing a ring of flour around the nest shortly before dusk. Check in the morning; if there are large rabbit imprints in the flour, mom has been there. If there are no footprints, call the WRL hotline at 703-440-0800. Do not visit the nest every few hours or the mother will abandon it. It is extremely rare to see the mother rabbit coming and going; the only way to know is using the flour ring.

Raccoons: Raccoon babies that are warm, furred and uninjured should be left in the area where seen so the mother can retrieve them after dark. Check in the morning, and if the babies are still there, call the WRL hotline at 703-440-0800.

Foxes: Foxes have more than one den site and often move the cubs. If a cub becomes separated from the adult, the adult will return to get it if it does not have human scent on it, and humans are not close. Leave the cub alone to give the parent a chance to retrieve it undisturbed. Use gloves if the cub must be moved out of harm's way, because foxes are very sensitive to scent. If the parent has not retrieved the cub in two hours, call the WRL hotline at 703-440-0800. *(Continued on back panel.)*

Wildlife Assistance Hotline 703-440-0800