

Most baby birds are of two main types:

Altricial Birds (Born Showing Skin Without Feathers)

One main type is called "ALTRICIAL". Altricial birds are hatched without feathers, their eyes are closed, and they rely totally on their parents for warmth and food. Baby birds must be fed every 15 – 20 minutes from sunrise to sunset. Robins, Blue Jays, and Cardinals are altricial type birds.

Precocial Birds (Fuzzy and Walking, Chick-like)

The other main type of baby bird is called "PRECOCIAL". Precocial birds are hatched as soft downy chicks. These babies can follow their parents around shortly after hatching and do not have to be fed by a parent at all. These babies can peck at the ground for food while following its mother and stay with her for warmth and protection. Ducks, Geese and Killdeer are precocial birds. These babies usually require help when they are separated from their parents. Call a Wildlife Rehabilitator for help as soon as possible.

How to Return Babies to the Nest

Young "altricial" birds, (those that are born with their eyes closed, look pink, and are featherless), sometimes are knocked or blown out of a nest, or are pushed out by a sibling. They may have downy feathers (like peach fuzz), or some feathers on their bodies. These babies can be picked up and cupped in the hands until they feel warm. Once they are warm, they should be placed back up into their nest. It is NOT true that the parents will abandon their babies if they smell human scent. Most birds do NOT have a strong sense of smell.

Nests that are Destroyed

Sometimes nests are blown down by windstorms, knocked out of gutters, dumped from hanging plants, or destroyed by predators. Sometimes you cannot replace the babies because it is too high to reach their nest or the tree that their nest was in has been cut down. You can manufacture a make-shift nest with a berry basket or plastic butter tub (if you use a butter tub, punch holes in the bottom for drainage). If you can save the nest, place it in the plastic container. If the nest is gone, line the berry basket with clean, dry paper towels in a bowl shape. Do NOT use grass because it contains moisture that will chill the babies. Wire the "new" nest up as close to the original location as possible. You may have to put it on another branch or a nearby tree or bush. Make sure it is out of direct sunlight, or weather. Then warm the babies in your hands and put them into the make-shift nest. Leave the area and watch from a distance (or use binoculars) or the parents will not return. They may be skeptical about the new nest at first, but once the young start crying out in hunger, the parents will land to feed them.

How to Rescue A Baby Bird

If you know for a fact that the parent birds are gone, there is no way to put the babies back, or the babies are cold and limp, then they need to be rescued. Remove the babies from the nest. Keep them in a small, dark, covered box with holes punched in the lid. Warm the babies by positioning a heating pad, set on LOW, under the box. Other ways to warm the babies are to fill a ziplock bag or rubber glove with warm water and place it in the box, or microwave a dish towel for 25 seconds (only warm enough that you can place the towel over your face) and use that. You can also hang a 40 watt light bulb over the box to generate heat. Do NOT put fresh green grass in the box because the moisture in it will chill them. You may line the box with paper towels. Do NOT pet or handle the babies. They may gape (open their beaks) **but do NOT feed them** anything including milk, water, honey, egg or homemade formula because their stomachs will not tolerate these items and it is easy to drown a baby bird with fluid. Call a Wildlife Rehabilitator for help as soon as possible.

Fledglings

Baby birds that are found on the ground, are already feathered, and are able to hop, but are not yet ready to fly, are called “fledglings”. These young birds are sometimes mistaken for a bird with a broken wing. A bird with a broken wing will hold the injured wing lower than the good wing. Most broken wings will droop very low. Fledglings can be as large as the parents (sometimes appearing even larger), and are fully feathered. Fledglings are able to hop, but not yet fly. These birds should NOT be put back into the nest. They should be put back where they were found or close to it so their parents can continue to feed them. This is a very important time for the young birds to learn by observing their parents. This learning stage is probably the most dangerous time of a bird's life, but is a very natural step. They will learn about finding food, avoiding predators, and how to fly. Many people who mean well, take these young birds in by mistake. If you want to help, keep people and pets out of the area. It will take about 5-15 days before the baby can actually fly well.

Cat Attacked Baby Birds

Any bird that has been caught or attacked by a cat must be brought to a Wildlife Rehabilitator. Cats have bacteria (germs) in their mouths that will cause a bird to die, usually within 3 days, if left untreated.

Rabbit Nest Description

Wild cottontail rabbits “nest” in shallow holes dug in the ground by the mother rabbit. Nests are often found in people's lawns, gardens or shrubs. The mother rabbit lines the shallow hole with fur pulled from her body and covers it and her babies with a mixture of dry grass and twigs to hide it from predators.

How A Mother Rabbit Feeds Her Babies

The mother rabbit feeds her babies 2 to 3 times a day. Once before early morning (dawn) and a couple of times right after it gets dark (dusk). She squats over the top of the nest so the babies can reach up and nurse her milk.

The mother rabbit does NOT continually sit on the nest or stay with the baby bunnies. Doing so would signal carnivorous (meat eating) birds and animals (like owls and fox) as to where her babies are living. By staying away from the nest, it protects them.

Problems for Rabbits

Because many rabbits nest in yards, they are likely to get run over with lawnmowers, struck by weedwhackers or caught by pet dogs and cats.

What To Do If a Nest is Disturbed

If a nest of baby rabbits is accidentally uncovered by a lawnmower, rake, shovel, or weedwhacker, carefully check to make sure the bunnies are not hurt, cut, or bleeding. If they are NOT hurt, put them back in the nest and cover them up. When putting bunnies back in the nest (especially older ones), they will “pop” up trying to hop. This is normal.

Place two long thin twigs or two pieces of string in an “X” across the top of the nest. Check the nest AFTER the mother has had time to feed them (usually the next day). If the “X” is moved, the mother has uncovered the nest to feed her babies. Now just leave them alone. This may mean mowing around a small patch in the yard for a short time.

If the “X” is NOT moved, then carefully uncover the nest and feel the babies to see if they are warm. If they are still okay, check again after the next feeding time. Be aware that sometimes the babies nurse by pushing straight up through the nest covering and therefore do not disturb

the string. The real test is the body temperature and activity of the babies. If they are cold and limp, then they need to be rescued. Remove the babies from the nest. Keep them in a small, dark, covered box with holes punched in the lid. Warm the bunnies by positioning a heating pad, set on LOW, under HALF the box. Other ways to warm the babies are to fill a ziplock bag or rubber glove with warm water and place it in the box, or microwave a dish towel for 25 seconds (only warm enough that you can place the towel over your face) and use that. Do NOT put fresh green grass in the box because the moisture in it will chill them. You may line the box with paper towels. Do NOT pet or handle the bunnies because they stress easily. They may look calm but they are actually just very scared. Do NOT feed the bunnies anything including any kind of milk, water, honey, eggs or homemade formula because their stomachs will not tolerate it. Call a Wildlife Rehabilitator for help as soon as possible.

What to Do for Bunnies That Are Attacked by Pets

If the bunnies are caught by a cat or dog and have been bitten, put them in the warm, dark box (see instructions above) and call a Wildlife Rehabilitator for help. Cats have bacteria (germs) in their mouths that will cause a rabbit to die, usually within 3 days, if left untreated.

Determining Which Bunnies Should Be In The Nest

Bunnies that are pink with little or no fur, with closed eyes, and with ears still flat to their bodies should still be in the nest. Baby rabbits stay in the nest for about 4 weeks. They leave the nest when they are about 4" or 5" long and the white diamond shaped patch of fur on their forehead is almost gone. They will also have fluffy fur, their eyes will be open and their ears will stand up away from their bodies. They will look like tiny adults and are supposed to be on their own without their mother. Leave these bunnies alone unless they are injured.

Touching Baby Bunnies/Misconception

Touching baby bunnies will NOT make the mother abandon (leave) them. This is a common misconception people mistakenly have.

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