



DESERT WILDLIFE
CENTER

Nature's Miracle: The Baby Bird

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What is Wildlife Rehabilitation?

Wildlife rehabilitation: the practice of rescuing, treating, and caring for sick, injured, or orphaned wild animals with the goal of returning them to the wild. This process involves veterinary care, specialized diet, and behavioral assessments to ensure animals are healthy and capable of surviving in their natural habitats.

Release Criteria:

- Fear/avoidance of humans, cars, pets
- Ability to recognize and obtain food
- Ability to reproduce
- Opposite of TNR
- Disease free
 - Releasing unhealthy/unfit animals puts the whole ecosystem at risk



Baby Bird Basics



- **There are almost 200 species of birds in the Coachella Valley (even more than migrate through)**
- **About 3 billion birds die in the US every year, mostly from human-related causes**
 - **Window strikes**
 - **Hit by car**
 - **Cat or dog caught**
- **Baby birds are generally classified as either:**
 - **Altricial - born naked, blind, and helpless (songbirds/hummingbirds)**
 - **Precocial - born covered in down, able to swim, walk and, eat immediately (ducks)**
- **Precocial birds have a higher survival rate**



The Life Stages of a Bird



- **Hatchling (less than 7 days)** - eyes closed, little to no feathering, cannot regulate its own temperature, completely dependant on parents for survival, not ready to leave the nest.



- **Nestling (7-14 days old)** - eyes are open, may have wispy yellow hair-like feathers on head, wing feathers will have dark tube surrounding the feather sheath (also known as a blood feather). Still reliant on parents for food and warmth and cannot yet leave the nest.



- **Fledgling (14+ days old)** - almost fully feathered, often seen on the ground. Wing and tail feathers may appear shorter than adult feathering (still growing in). This bird may not be able to fly well, but can walk, hop, and flutter around. It has left the nest, though its parents may be nearby, taking good care of it.





What to do if you find a bird on the ground

- **Determine the bird's developmental stage to figure out what to do.**
 - **Hatchlings and nestlings - must go back into a nest**
 - **Fledglings - can be left on the ground**
- **Determine if the animal is injured or not**
 - **Do the limbs look symmetrical?**
 - **Do you see any blood or obvious injuries/wounds?**
 - **Does the animal appear bright/alert or lethargic?**
 - **Does the animal attempt to flee if approached or is it unable to move away?**
- **Fledglings can be mistaken as young adult birds that are injured - they are essentially awkward teenagers that are figuring out how to use their body and navigate the world.**
- **Call our Wildlife Helpline at (760) 203-5500 if you are unsure if the bird is healthy enough to leave alone or not.**



Attempting to Renest/Reunite

- **If the bird appears healthy, then renesting it is the bird's best chance at long term survival!**
- **Wild animals rarely abandon their babies! Mom and Dad are likely foraging for food nearby.**
- **Immediately look around for the nest; it should be nearby. Using gloves, gently put the baby back in the nest.**
- **Parents and siblings may react aggressively when you approach the nest. Move slowly, avoid direct eye contact, and try not to speak loudly when approaching.**
- **If you can't locate the original nest or it is too high to reach, you can make an artificial makeshift nest.**
- **These tips can apply to reuniting mammal babies too!**



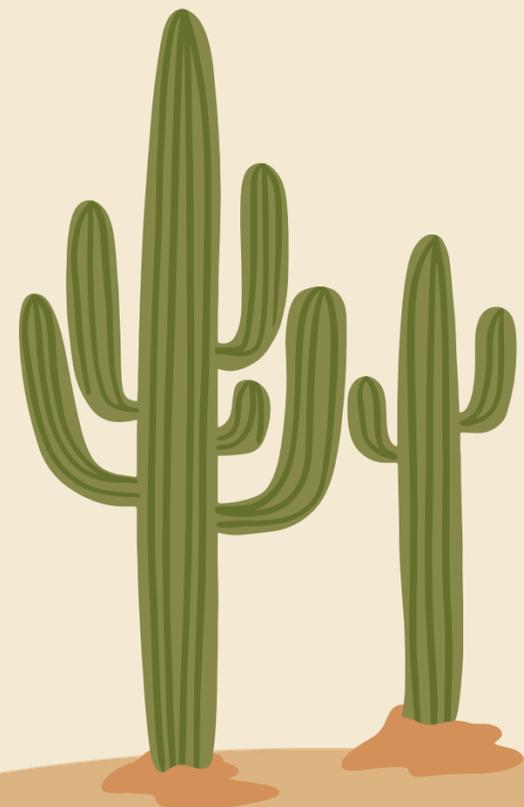
Artificial Nests

- **Poke drainage holes in the bottom of a tupperware container, small box, or laundry basket.**
- **Fill the container halfway with soft grass or similar material, creating a depression in the center to mimic a cup-shaped nest.**
- **Avoid using yarn/string/towels in the nest as these can entangle the baby bird or their parents.**
- **Place the artificial nest as close as possible to where the baby bird was found and secure the nest in the tree.**
- **Place the artificial nest out of the reach of predators.**
- **In the case of owls, parents will only return after dark.**
- **Check on the baby once or twice an hour to see if parents have returned. Try to watch from afar if possible. If parents have not returned in a few hours, you may need to bring the baby to a permitted wildlife rehabber for care.**



What if I have ducklings in my pool?

- **Ducklings can easily drown if left in a pool.**
- **Turn off the filtration so the ducklings do not get sucked into the system.**
- **Provide a ramp: Ducklings may be unable to fly or jump onto the edge of a pool. Provide a ramp out of the pool using a non-slippery surface, such as a plank of wood covered with a towel, a piece of cardboard, or a yoga mat.**
- **Using a net: As a last resort, use a net to remove the ducklings, but it is easy to injure the babies doing this and it is very stressful for them.**
- **Ducklings can't be relocated: Ducklings shouldn't be picked up and moved to another location.**
 - **This is true for most animals. Relocating doesn't necessarily set them up for success.**





Important Reminders

- **All animals need to be in a warm, dark and quiet environment. STRESS IS THE SILENT KILLER!**
- **To a baby bird, you are a big giant predator! Not to mention, they can carry diseases and parasites. Don't talk or pet any wildlife.**
- **Handle very sparingly and always wear gloves.**
- **Do not attempt to feed - you may cause more harm than good!**
- **Keep your pets inside if you know you have baby wildlife in your yard.**
- **Do not trim your trees and bushes during nesting season.**
- **It is a myth that touching a baby bird will make mom reject the animal. Parents don't abandon their babies just because they smell a little weird.**





It's Nesting Season!

- Nesting season starts in February and goes through August (October for some birds).
 - Due to climate change and warming temperatures, we are seeing our "baby season" expand into later months of the year.
- **PLEASE DON'T TRIM TREES OR BUSHES!**
- Tree trimming should be done in the winter from November through early February.
- Every year, thousand of baby birds are killed or injured because of tree trimming.
- Tree trimming during nesting season can also scare away parents and leave baby birds abandoned.
- Due to the migratory bird act, it is illegal to move bird nests once there is an egg or baby bird in the nest.



Mom and Dad will always do a better job raising wild animals than humans will!



“If the young bird is healthy, and all conditions are favorable, reuniting should be considered a moral obligation.” – Anne G. Miller

Any questions?

