

So what should you do if you see a baby bird on the ground?

I've collected the following advice from the Audubon Society and Wildlife Rehab and Release.

First of all, intervene as little as possible. Then, determine how old the bird is, and take the minimum action to ensure the bird's safety and survival.



Pinky—featherless, eyes closed, only 1-4 days old.

A pinky is unlikely to survive unless it is replaced in its original nest. It needs its mother's warmth and care. Look around to find the nest and gently place the bird inside. Move a distance away and watch to see if the parent returns to the nest. It may take 30-60 minutes, so be patient. If the parent does not return, the baby bird will need help to survive. Keep the bird warm, in a dark and quiet place, and call your local rehab organization.



Nestlings—a few feathers showing, not able to perch on your finger.

Look around for the nest (it is probably close by and well hidden) and replace the bird. If you don't see the nest or it is too high for you reach, you can place the bird in a substitute nest. Line a small berry basket with tissue and tie the basket to a tree. Place the nestling in the basket and leave it alone. Observe the bird for at least 45-60 minutes. If no parent comes, contact your local wildlife rehab organization.



Fledglings—fully feathered with a short tail, can perch on your finger.

Make every effort to leave the bird alone. You may move it to a nearby bush or tree for protection. Keep cats and other family pets inside. Watch to see if the parents are still caring for it. Some fledglings, such as robins, jays, crows, and owls, spend a few days on the ground after they leave nest learning from their parents how to find food, fly, and avoid predators. If they are "rescued" and removed from their habitat, they won't learn these important lessons. Observe the fledgling for 45-60 minutes to see if the parent returns. If not, call your local rehab organization.

Injured birds

If the bird appears to be an orphan and cannot move around well, pick it up off the ground before cats, dogs, kids, hawks, grackles, or ants attack it. If you can pick the bird up easily, it's either too young to be out of the nest (treat it as a pinky or nestling) or it is injured and needs to be rescued. Bring it inside and place it in a box. Cover the box with a lid that allows a lot of ventilation. Keep the bird warm (not hot) and in a dark and quiet place away from family pets. Call a rehabber.

A few Don'ts

- Don't give an injured bird food or water. Forcing a baby bird to drink can cause drowning. You may place a drop of water on the outside of a bird's beak and allow it to drink on its own.
- Don't try to pet a bird. They're not like a dog or cat, and it is very stressful for them to be touched.
- Don't try to raise the bird yourself. There are many sad stories of people with good intentions who did more harm than good to the birds they tried to care for. Rehabbers are trained to give birds the type of food and care that will help them survive as adults. Besides, it's illegal to raise wild birds unless you have a license.