

FOUND A BABY BIRD?



During the spring and summer, we often get calls from people who've found a baby songbird outside of the nest. Unfortunately, well-intentioned attempts to "save" a baby bird can do more harm than good. When should you take action, and what action should you take? We've created a handy chart to help you figure out what to do.

START

Is the bird visibly injured, or has a cat attacked it?

YES

Contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or wildlife care center. For more, visit massaudubon.org/babybirds.

NO

Are its eyes open?

YES

Is it well feathered, though with a short tail and wings, and can it walk, hop, or flutter?

NO

NO

YES



You have a hatchling, a baby that is between zero and four days old.

Are its feathers few and perhaps in tubelike sheaths?

YES



You have a nestling. It's usually three to 13 days old.



You have a fledgling, a baby that is 13-14 days old or older.

Can you see the nest?

YES

NO

Return the bird to the nest. Most birds don't have a well-developed sense of smell, so the parents won't know that the baby bird has been touched by a person.

Make a replacement nest using a shallow basket (2-5" high). Place dried grass in the bottom of the basket. Cut two 20" lengths of wire and push them through the bottom so there are four pieces of wire hanging down. Place the basket on the top of a branch in a nearby tree and use the wires to securely attach it. Put the birds inside.

Fledglings rarely need human intervention. Parent birds will continue to feed their offspring on the ground and teach them to fly. If a bird is in immediate danger (for example, if it's on a sidewalk or road), place it on top of a nearby shrub or bush and leave the area. Don't attempt to feed the baby—its parents can do a much better job!



Adapted from Rosemary Mosco's chart at birdandmoon.com.
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