

Baby Birds

What should you do?



Hatchlings - These are birds that have literally just hatched, as the name suggests. There are 2 types of hatchling birds, altricial; those that are helpless, naked and blind when hatched and precocial, those that are covered with down, eyes open and able to move about, ie ducklings. Most garden birds are the altricial type. If they fall from the nest at this stage, they will chill very, very quickly and die



Hatchling

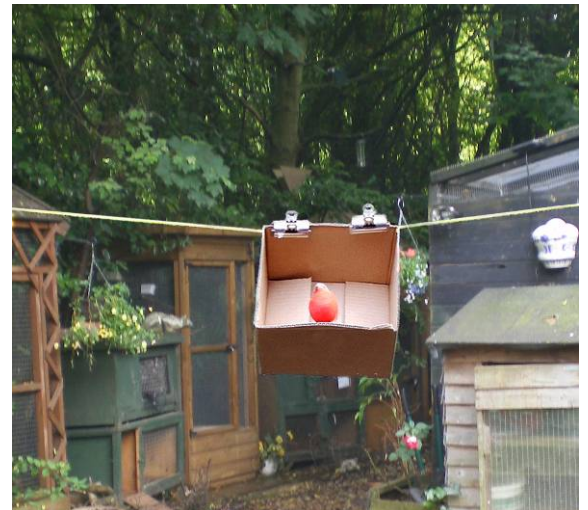


Nestling

Nestlings - These may have been blown or pushed out of the nest and are likely to have some feathers still "in pin" but will also have bald patches, particularly under the wings and around the back and neck. They will be unlikely to be able to hop about and will just sit there or shuffle along on very weak legs. Nestlings will generally gape their mouths at absolutely anyone in the hope of being fed. These birds are defenceless against predators and they are not able to get back into the nest. They will also chill quickly if left.

Fledglings - young, feathered birds with stubby tails, who are not yet able to fly, but can hop and run from danger. Fledglings are obviously vulnerable, but are expert hiders and their parents will be around to feed and protect them as much as possible. They MUST be left alone to continue this vital part of their development. They are VERY prone to stress at this age and will refuse to be fed by hand. Sadly, they generally die if picked up by humans.

If the fledgling is unharmed but you have already picked it up, please put it back where you found it. Don't worry too much about the parents abandoning the fledgling if you touch it, a bird's sense of smell is not sufficient to notice. If there is concern that the fledgling bird may be attacked by a cat, peg a cardboard box to the washing line (with the opening facing outward not upward - birds do not take off vertically!!) and pop the bird inside the box where it's calls will attract the parents. If the bird has already been attacked by a cat however, he will require a long acting antibiotic injection from a vet or wildlife rehabilitator.



Keeping Fledglings safe from cats!

Helping your Baby Bird - So, if the bird is not a fledgling, it will definitely need your help. Firstly, pick up the bird and hold it in a loose fist. This will help the bird warm up and will enable you to feel his temperature returning to normal. The first reaction is to try and give food or water to birds, but it is actually the worst thing that you can do to them. If the bird is too cold, water will just worsen his condition and even if he is not cold, he is likely to inhale the food or water, which will kill him. The parents of baby birds do not bring water to them; they get all of their liquid from the food that they eat.

When the bird is warm, you can begin to look for a qualified rehabber who can provide the right environment and feed him the proper food to enable him to grow and develop properly. Baby birds can be very cute and it may be tempting to try and rear him yourself. Unless you have the correct equipment and food however, your efforts are unlikely to be successful. We are specialists in the field of rearing baby birds and we usually care for around 250 per season, so please do call us for advice and help save a baby bird's life.

Tel: 07890 973050

www.wildlife-rescue.org.uk