



Is it injured?

It can be difficult to know if a wild animal, young or old, is truly injured and in need of help. Signs of an injured wild animal include:

- Protruding bones or bleeding.
- Flies, maggots or other parasites on the body.
- Inability to move away from threats like moving cars, pets or people.
- Lethargy, lack of fear when threatened or uncoordinated movement.
- Inability to fly or stand upright.

Removing a wild animal from its habitat and rearing it in captivity should only occur if absolutely necessary, as in cases where the animal is injured or attempts to encourage parental care have failed. ***Although it may seem more humane to “rescue” an animal, wildlife reared in captivity or babies raised without the benefit of learning from their parents have a greatly reduced chance of survival when and if they are released back into the wild.***

Even animals or birds with severe injuries are potentially dangerous. Contact the nearest department office for guidance on capturing and transporting wildlife.



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Arizona Game and Fish Department

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Leave Baby Wildlife Alone



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The human desire to help baby, orphaned or injured wildlife is an admirable trait. However, “helping” or “rescuing” wildlife can often have unintended consequences for the animal, including death. **In most cases, the best thing a person can do for a wild animal is to leave it alone.** This brochure offers some alternatives and guidelines to help individuals make the best decision possible if they encounter baby or injured wildlife.

Mammals

Baby Rabbits



- Baby rabbits usually are found under things such as old boards or bushes, or in debris piles.
- Mother rabbits only feed their babies a few times a day, usually at dawn and dusk.
- If baby rabbits are found, leave them alone. Carefully re-cover the nest, if necessary.
- If your pet finds a baby rabbit, try to return it to its nest if it is not injured. If the nest cannot be found or the baby rabbit is injured, contact the nearest Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) office or visit www.azgfd.gov/rehab for a list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators.

Deer Fawns and Elk Calves

- Fawns and calves are often hidden in vegetation and left alone by their mothers for several hours.
- If a fawn or calf attempts to follow you, gently push on its shoulders until it lies down.
- Never try to capture a fawn or calf, even if it appears to be sick or injured. Instead, record its location and contact the nearest department office.
- Once removed from the wild, elk calves and deer fawns are rarely able to be returned to the wild. Limited space at appropriate facilities and disease concerns make it very difficult to find homes for hand-raised deer and elk orphans.



Birds

Fledglings



- Fledglings (*baby birds without fully developed flight feathers*) are often seen fluttering from branch to branch, or from the ground to low branches.
- Leaving the nest to practice flying is a natural part of a baby bird’s development. Placing a fully-feathered baby back into its nest typically does not work, and the young bird will usually leave again.
- Fledglings should be left alone and moved only if they are at risk of immediate injury or death. If moved, the young bird should be placed on nearby vegetation as close as possible to the nest site or the location where it was first noticed.
- The parents will usually continue to care for the baby, if people and pets stay away.

Fallen Nests with Eggs or Nestlings

- If you find a baby bird and believe it is too young to survive on its own (*i.e., it is not fully feathered or its eyes are closed*), the best thing to do is to return the bird to its nest. If it is not possible to access the nest, place the nestling in an artificial nest at a lower location as close as possible to the original location.
- Secure the nest directly to the tree with string or wire, if necessary, but be sure that the nest opening remains accessible.
- If the nest was damaged in a fall, “remodel” it as necessary or provide an artificial nest like a small basket or box lined with dry grass, soft cloth or shredded paper.
- The parents may be wary of the new location or nest, and might take a few hours before they approach. If the parents do not return after a few hours, contact the nearest department office or visit www.azgfd.gov/rehab for a list of licensed rehabilitators.



Ground-nesting Birds

- Some birds, such as quail, ducks and geese, nest on the ground in Arizona.
- If you or your pet discovers a nest with eggs, the best thing to do is leave it alone and avoid the area. The parents are likely to return if the nest is left undisturbed.
- If you startle a family of quail and the young disperse, leave the area and wait for the parents to call the family back together.
- If the parents do not collect the babies after an hour, contact the nearest department office or visit www.azgfd.gov/rehab for a list of licensed rehabilitators.



Resources

For more information on urban wildlife, please see the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Living with Wildlife webpages at www.azgfd.gov/urbanwildlife or call your regional department office at:

Flagstaff	(928) 774-5045
Kingman	(928) 692-7700
Mesa	(480) 981-9400
Phoenix – Main.....	(602) 942-3000
Pinetop.....	(928) 367-4281
Tucson	(520) 628-5376
Yuma	(928) 342-0091

