

Common Wildlife Emergencies

Quick tips: Caring for wildlife before it gets to a rehabilitator

- Find a size-appropriate container with adequate ventilation like a cardboard box, plastic bin with holes, or a plastic cat/dog carrier.
- Place old towels, shredded paper or paper towels in the bottom. If it is a baby animal, create a make-shift nest. DO NOT use cat litter, wood shavings or any other bedding in the container as this can harm the animal if ingested.
- If it is a bird or other climbing animal, you could place a small branch inside for the animal to perch on or climb.
- DO NOT attempt to feed any animal unless instructed to do so by a wildlife rehabilitator. Many animals require specialized diets and feeding them the wrong thing can be deadly.
- DO NOT leave water or food in the container unattended as injured animals and babies can accidentally drown.
- If the animal feels cold to the touch or is shivering, you can provide mild heat in a few different forms. You can safely provide heat by warming up about 1 cup of rice in an old sock for about 30 seconds, and placing in the container. Be sure you test out the temperature before placing in with the animal! It should feel warm to the touch but not hot.
- Put the container somewhere quiet, dark and secure, ideally indoors rather than outside in your yard where other animals may be drawn to it.

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- **Baby birds - not fully feathered**

These should be put back in the nest or nearby in a makeshift nest, such as a box or plastic container lined with shredded tissue. The makeshift nest can be tacked it up to a nearby tree where the parents can easily access it. The parents have no sense of smell & will not reject the baby. The parents will not feed their baby if you're visible so observe from afar. If a parent does not return to the nest within two hours, rescue should be initiated.

If rescue is needed, you should place the baby bird in a small box with a makeshift nest made of paper towels, shredded paper or an old towel, and keep the bird in a quiet, safe place until you can get it to a rehabilitator. Do not leave water or food in the container unattended as baby birds can accidentally drown.

- **Baby birds - fully feathered**

The animal is unable to fly more than a few feet along the ground are considered fledglings and are usually being taught to fly and find food on their own. If adults are present, do not interfere. They will take care of the baby until he can fend for himself. Be sure to keep your cats and dogs indoors during this time. If it seems no adults are tending to the fledgling, and no imminent danger is present, wait two to three days before intervening. However, if no adults are present and there is an imminent danger, rescue should be initiated.

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- **Tree Squirrels**

If the squirrel is able to walk steadily & climb on his own, place him on a high branch & watch to see if a parent leads him back to the nest. If the squirrel is unable to climb, or his eyes are not yet open, follow the same procedures as for the not fully feathered baby birds.

- **Ground Squirrels**

Since infants are rarely seen above ground, you may have caught the mother in the process of moving her babies. Keep a close eye out and intervene if the mother does not retrieve “abandoned” babies within thirty minutes.

- **Raccoons & Skunks**

People should wear gloves when handling raccoons as they can carry rabies & other diseases. Since skunks can be rabies & leptospirosis vectors, do not attempt to catch the animal yourself, call a professional.

- **Opossums**

Babies can survive on their own when they are at least six inches long, not counting the tail. If you find a deceased female, check the pouch for any live young. If live young are found, wrap them in a soft, ravel-free towel and transport to a wildlife rehabilitator immediately. Young opossums cannot survive long outside the pouch environment.

Opossums are generally shy, will avoid people and will appear dead when extremely frightened and may also emit a foul odor to dissuade predators from eating them! If found in your yard but not appearing injured, the best thing to do is leave area and give the opossum time to recover. Put your dogs and cats in house. Do not immediately place the opossum in a plastic bag or garbage can! If after at least 4 hours there is no movement or signs of life, you can safely dispose of the deceased animal by wearing protective gloves and simply double-bagging it and putting it out with your trash. You can also contact animal control in your area, but not all local agencies will come out for wildlife remains and disposal, unless an illness is suspected.

- **Ducks in a pool**

You can discourage migrating ducks from enjoying your pool by putting brightly covered objects like beach balls or kids’ toys in the water. You can also cover the pool until the ducks have moved on, as well as trim low-lying shrubs and bushes to discourage female waterfowl from nesting on your property.

Find a rehabilitator or other wildlife information for your area

- For state by state listings of rehabilitators, visit the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association www.nwrawildlife.org and go directly to “Finding a Rehabilitator” to get started.
- For state by state, as well as international listings of rehabilitators, visit the Wildlife Rehabilitation Information Directory <http://wildliferehabinfo.org> or go directly to “Locate a Wildlife Rehabilitator” to get started.