



## What Should I Do if I Find a Baby Bird?

By Dr Amy Howe – Veterinarian



It is that time of the year when babies born in the springtime are maturing, and in the bird world that means learning to fly!

Baby birds will stay in the nest as '**nestlings**' as they learn to perch, gain strength, and develop flight feathers. They then become '**branchlings**', where they may explore and continue to gain strength in the safety of tree branches. After this they are then '**fledglings**', where they are learning to fly, but not particularly good at it!

It is this **fledgling stage** where you may see more baby birds on the ground, as they have started to leave the nest. Noisy Miner birds (light grey body with a yellow beak) are a common native species where fledgling chicks are often seen on the ground as they start to take flight from the nest. At this stage, the parents are usually closely watching from nearby and coming back and forward to feed the chick as needed.

This is a normal part of a bird's growth stage, and often our well-meaning intervention can be detrimental to their safety and development with their family.



---

If you see a baby bird on the ground, unless it is in immediate danger from a pet or traffic, or if it is obviously injured – STOP – do not touch it and follow the steps below:

- If the bird is in immediate danger:
  - Place the baby into a small open box or container with soft bedding and drainage holes
  - Place back into a nearby tree or bush and call Sydney Wildlife for further instructions
  
- Wait for 30 mins to 1 hour and watch for the parents:
  - If they return during this time, they will be feeding the baby and watching them
  - No further intervention is required, the baby should fledge
  
- If the parents do not return:
  - Place baby into a small open box or container with soft bedding and drainage holes and place into a nearby tree or bush
  - Call Sydney Wildlife for further instructions

It is important that fledgings remain in their parents' care for this period so that they can learn how to survive in the wild. If separated at this critical stage and placed into care, it is very difficult to release them again, because they have not had a chance to learn the critical survival skills that they need to thrive.



# HAVE YOU FOUND A BABY BIRD ?



## Identification

Not all baby birds are raised in a nest (altricial), some are ready to take on the world the day they are born (precocial). Seek advice to correctly identify a baby bird before placing it in a makeshift nest.

## Featherless

I have no feathers to keep me warm, if mum and dad do not return soon, I will need to be taken into care. Please keep me warm on transport to a Wildlife Hospital or Veterinary Clinic.



I am out and about early in life (precocial)

## Fledgling

I have just left the nest and I am learning to fly under the watchful eye of mum and dad. I am on the ground for a reason, so please do not "rescue" me unless I am in danger; in this case place me on a branch for safety.

## Kidnapping

Do not take me from my parents, they can teach me all the lessons and survival skills I need to know as a bird; how to fly, what food to eat, how to find food and how to avoid predators. So please do not rescue me unless I am in danger, in this case place me on a branch for safety.



I am raised in a nest (altricial)

## Veterinarian

If I am sick, injured or have been in a cat or dog's mouth I will need Veterinary attention. Please keep me warm on transport to a Wildlife Hospital or Veterinary Clinic.

## Legislation

Under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992, it is illegal to take protected wildlife from the wild. Registered carers can help, contact your local wildlife group or wildlife hospital.

# 4 EASY STEPS TO MAKING A NEW HOME

1. If the bird is really young and has soft and fluffy down instead of feathers and you are not able to place it in its original nest, then you need to make a new home using a bucket, (approx 40 - 50 cm deep) with holes punched in the bottom for drainage.
2. Put in a layer of soft leaves or grass. Place a stick (about 60 cm long) in the bucket and secure it into one of the drainage holes, so the parents and baby bird can get in and out.
3. Hang bucket head height in a leafy protected area, away from direct sunlight and as close as possible to where you found it. Mum and Dad do not mind if we are in a different tree or if the baby has been handled by a human.
4. Watch from a distance to make sure the parents return to feed the baby. If the new home is disturbed, this may take hours. If the parents do not return by dark, we will need to go into care.

