

Baby songbirds

If the bird is uninjured and has some feathers, put it up in the nearest tree. The parents have no sense of smell and will not know a person has touched it. If it can't perch and has fallen out of the nest, put it up the tree in a berry basket, plastic margarine cup or shoebox lined in shredded tissue. Stand back some distance and watch to make sure the parents return. Parent will come feed if they are not frightened by the presence of people.

If the bird runs around and is chick-like (covered with short fuzzy down) it may be a baby quail or killdeer. These birds nest on the ground, and the parents fly off when people come near. Leave the immediate area and watch to see if a parent will come back. (You may have to wait up to 1 hr.)

The bird needs help and should be picked up if:

- The parents are dead
- The bird is newly hatched and the nest and nest mates are out of reach
- The bird fell from a tall bare-trunked tree, and attaching a substitute nest high on the trunk failed to attract the parents. (Note: a shoe box or small margarine cup can be duct-taped or nailed to the trunk quite successfully)
- It has an injury
- A cat or a child has brought it in from places unknown

If the bird is injured, or has no feathers, it is very important to keep it warm.

- Use a heating pad set on low, a light source (low wattage)
- Fractures need to be set within 48 hrs. Or they heal incorrectly or get infected

If the bird is uninjured, parents will come feed it after people leave.

If someone has picked up a healthy baby bird or a nest-full of babies and has kept it for a day or two, they can still try returning it to the nest site.

Parent birds have home territories and, even if the nest and babies are gone, the parents remain there searching for their babies and will sometimes resume feeding them after an absence of one or two days.

Raising an orphaned songbird takes from 4-8 weeks and a lot of daytime commitment. They need feeding about every 45 minutes from 6AM to 8PM for 4-6 weeks. No trips to the beach while you're a bird mother!

When they become self feeding (which may not be until six weeks old), they need to be exposed to their natural food (grains, etc. for seed eaters, mealworms, fruit and berries for the insect and fruit eaters).

- After being completely self-feeding for one week, they need two weeks in an outdoor aviary to fly and compete with others.

Hummingbirds, pigeons, doves, hawks, owls, killdeer and quail need special formulas or feeding techniques. Try and get these birds to us as soon as possible

Note: Hummingbird babies fed sugar water or "hummingbird nectar" AND hawks/owls fed hamburger, etc. For more than 24 hrs. Will develop crippling deformities. It is crucial they be fed the proper diet!

Temporary Diet (24-48 Hours)

What to feed:

- Soaked dry cat food (Science Diet, Iams) OR soaked dry dog food OR hard-boiled egg mashed with water

To prepare:

- Add two parts boiling water to one dry food and soak for one hour
- Drain excess water
- Mash well with fork, ricer or blender. Use canned foods as is, or add water if necessary
- Consistency should be like thick applesauce

How to feed:

- Use a wooden coffee stirrer, straw or paintbrush to put a mouthful of moist food into the back of the bird's throat
- Feed until the bird stops gaping. (Opening its mouth)
- If it won't gape, tap the side of the beak, shake the "nest" gently

Do: Keep the bird CLEAN (no food on face or feathers), QUIET (no children or pets in sight of the bird), CONTAINED (a box with screen top).

Don't: Give the bird milk (causes diarrhea) or any liquid (the entrance to the lungs is on the tongue and they may drown).

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