



SO YOU FOUND A...

# Baby Songbird

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## INTRODUCTION

The only way for baby birds to learn to fly is to practice. The parents kick them out of the nest when they have most of their feathers and have a little tail about a half an inch long. Birds at this stage can balance themselves, have their eyes open, and usually flutter around. The parents are keeping an eye on their offspring and are continuing to feed them every 30 minutes or so. You may not see the parents if you are hovering over the baby, or if you are not constantly watching (the parents swoop down and stick something in the baby's mouth and then fly away to find new food).

If the fledgling is in the middle of a busy road or sidewalk, move it gently over to the side under some bushes or another sheltered area. The parents will still hear it cheeping and continue to feed it. If you are worried about predators, the parents will often dive-bomb anything that approaches the baby. However, if the bird is in your yard, you should keep your domestic animals inside or on leashes for the next week or so, until the baby learns to fly. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.

## SIGNS OF TROUBLE/TRANSPORT

If the fledgling has its eyes closed, is wobbly, has visible wounds, has been in a dog or cat's mouth, or has parasites (fly strike), it needs to come to Operation Wildlife as soon as possible. Do **NOT** attempt to give any food or water. Baby birds have an extremely high metabolism, so it needs to get professional help as soon as possible. Put the baby in a box lined with a non-terrycloth towel. The box needs to have a LID with air holes; the bird may not be able to fly, but it still could be able to flutter all over your car, endangering both of you. Fill a Zip-Lock bag with warm (**NOT HOT**) water to put in the box with it. Again, **DO NOT FEED OR OFFER WATER** without speaking to an Operation Wildlife volunteer first.

## HATCHLINGS AND NESTLINGS

If the baby is bald or has only a few feathers and/or its eyes are closed, it is not old enough to be out of the nest. If it has visible wounds, has been in a dog or cat's mouth, or has parasites, it needs to come to OWL as soon as possible following the transportation instructions above. Keeping this baby warm is of utmost importance since it is too young to regulate its own body temperature.

If the baby looks healthy but has fallen from the nest, put it back if you know where the nest is. If not, you can make a substitute nest with a berry basket, margarine tub or Cool Whip container. You need to poke holes in the margarine tub and Cool Whip container for drainage. If you have the nest, you can place it in the container. If you do not have the nest, you can line the container with dry paper towels in a bowl shape. Do not use green grass as it is wet and will chill the babies. The nest needs to be shallow as the parents sit on the side to feed the babies. Wire or nail the container as high up in the tree as you can and place it out of direct sunlight. It should be protected from the weather. The babies will chirp when they are hungry and the parents should recognize the chirps and feed the babies. You will need to watch from a distance for at least one hour to make sure the parents are feeding the babies. If they do not take care of them, you need to bring them to OWL as soon as possible. Again, make sure you keep the babies warm and quiet.



**Nestling** (quills showing, downy and short feathers sprouting, pushing up on legs)



**Fledgling** (feathered with wing and tail feathers, can balance and attempt flight)