



## BABY BIRD INFORMATION

**WAIT... DON'T PICK UP THAT BABY! 75% of young birds that are seen on the ground have not fallen from their nest, nor are they injured or abandoned! Here are some things you should know:**

Nestlings are birds that belong in the nest... generally helpless, they may be nearly featherless if they've recently hatched, or they may have feathers, but not pin feathers. They are birds that cannot fly at all. If a nestling is on the ground, then it needs help. Keep an eye on the bird and call Animal Services; they will decide whether it is okay to put the bird back in its nest or take it to a qualified rehabilitator. Many times the fall alone is detrimental to the bird and it should not be left in the nest. Most nestlings are not on the ground by accident. Often the nest has been damaged or the parent has pushed them out for one reason or another.



A fledgling bird is older and ready to go; it's in the process of learning to fly and not on the ground as a result of some catastrophe. Fledglings have no sheaths on their feathers and usually feature a stubby, partially-developed set of tail feathers as well. A good way to tell if the bird is able to go it alone is its ability to perch. If the bird can grip and balance, then chances are it can be on its own.



Fledglings do not usually fall from their nest; they jump. As the young birds grow the nest gets crowded, so they leave before they are capable of flying. This is **normal**. The **best** thing to do with them is leave them where they are as their parents are likely nearby taking care of it. Do not attempt to put it back in its nest or raise it yourself. It is to young birds' advantage to leave the nest as soon as they can. People tend to think of birds' nests as safe, cozy little homes. But actually a nest is rather a dangerous place because, by concentrating all the vulnerable young in one location, predators may eat them all if they find them. Parent birds work to raise their young and get them out of the nest as quickly as possible. Then they can spread the youngsters out and move them around to a different spot every night, enhancing each one's chances of survival.

The youngster may require two or three weeks on the ground before it masters flight. The parents know where the young bird is and are taking care of it. The fact that the bird may appear confused or frightened isn't unusual. Parents will disperse their fledglings into different areas to mitigate the odds of a predator getting the entire brood; so yes, it's alone, but no, it's not orphaned. A fledgling knows how to call for mom or dad if needs be.

Do not attempt to feed or otherwise care for a nestling or fledgling. It's difficult, for one thing, and against federal law, for another.

### **IS THE FLEDGLING IN HARMS WAY?**

If an animal is in immediate harm's way, it should be moved into a safer area. This would be a bird in the middle of the street, or on the ground in the middle of a yard with a cat in it, or something similar. A bird on the ground can be put up in a bush or low tree that would keep it out of the reach of dogs or children. Ideally the cover location would have dense foliage that would conceal the bird and would be connected to more shrubs and trees that the bird could climb to. If the fledgling is in a residential yard, keep the pets inside until the bird is gone. This helpless stage is temporary, and the bird will be gone in a couple of days.

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Now, you may have been told that the parent birds will reject any babies that have been touched by humans, but that is not so. Birds have virtually no sense of smell. Mom and Dad do not have a clue if the babies have been touched or not.

## **WHEN TO CALL ANIMAL SERVICES FOR HELP**

Look the bird over for physical signs of trauma. Is it bleeding, or drooping one wing lower. The simple fact that it cannot fly is often misleading. Many birds hop, which does not mean they are limping. Don't let their size fool you; many fledglings are nearly full grown!

If you have an injured bird or any questions please call Irvine Animal Services at 949-724-7092 or Irvine Police Dispatch at 949-724-7200