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| Nestling Birds | ::Logos:CNB-Logo-Wide.pdf |

**Baby Birds** – To rescue or not to rescue?  That is an excellent question!

**Nestling**Nestling songbirds are still nest-bound and very dependent on their parents for care.  Their eyes are open and they are vocal. Older nestling are preening (grooming) themselves and beginning to exercise their wings. In general, young nestling songbirds have pin feathers (feathers which are just developing and still covered in a keratin sheath) and older nestlings have mostly feathered bodies, but are still growing in their tail and wing feathers. Notice the difference in coverage and development of feathers in these photos.

The length of the nestling stage varies from species to species, but is usually 9-12 days. SWALLOWS are an exception as they remain in the nest until they are approximately 20 days of age.  Nature’s plan for baby songbirds is for them to grow quickly so they can leave their nest quickly.  As prey species, the longer they’re in the nest, the more vulnerable they are to predators.

**When to Intervene**

Sometimes baby songbirds are genuinely in need of human assistance.  Below are guidelines to help you determine if a baby songbird needs your help.  Choose the circumstance below that best describe your situation that best describes your situation:  
          
**I think a nest of baby songbirds has been orphaned.**

Please follow these steps first, BEFORE you attempt a rescue:

·       Watch the nest for at least one hour, non-stop.  Parent birds are fast and discreet when feeding their young.  So by taking your eyes off the baby or the nest for even a few seconds, you could miss the parents delivering a meal.

·       Observe at a safe distance away from the nest or the baby, at least 50 feet.  If you can view the birds from a place indoors, this is even better.  Parent birds will be wary to approach their baby if they know a predator (human, or otherwise) is in the vicinity.

·       Keep pets inside while you’re observing.  If you have a child observing with you, make sure they understand it is important to remain very quiet and still.

·       If you observe the parent birds delivering food and tending to their young, all is well.

·       If you are certain the baby/babies are abandoned, follow the instructions for “[Preparing a bird for transport](http://nativesongbirdcare.org/I_found_a_bird.html#anchor_transport)”.

**I found a nestling on the ground:**

* Carefully and loosely wrap it in a soft cloth and place it in a small box or bag with a few holes for ventilation
* Keep the baby warm, dark and quiet
* Placing the container with the baby in it on a heating pad set on LOW will be very helpful in keeping the baby warm.
* Do not offer it any food, medicine or water
* Call 303-823-2326 immediately for further advice, even if you know where the nest is. Or better yet, send a photo of the bird to 303-618-0357 or in a message via Facebook.
* If the bird is a healthy, warm nestling we will most likely advise you to return the baby to the nest

 **A nest destroyed/blown down/cut down:**

Please call us first before attempting to re-nest baby birds.  Re-nesting songbirds does not simply involve preparing an artificial nest and attaching it to a tree branch, or relocating the original nest.  Songbirds are very selective about the structure and placement of their nest. Even under the best of circumstances, a nest of baby songbirds is extremely vulnerable to predation by jays, crows, hawks, squirrels, raccoons, snakes, rats, and cats; as well as exposure to the elements and human disturbance.

**I found a baby songbird** that has had contact, or suspected contact, with a cat or dog.

Even if you can’t find any injuries, you need to bring the bird to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for care.  The tiniest puncture wound, especially from a cat, quickly introduces lethal bacteria into a bird’s body.

**I found a sick or injured Nestling.** Any of these signs warrant rescue:

* Has a strange odor.
* Eyes or nostrils that appear infected or bloody
* Whose droppings are liquid and white or bright green.
* Has bugs, ants, and/or flies crawling all over it.
* Is bleeding
* Has legs or wings sticking out at odd angles.

If the bird exhibits any of the signs above, rescue it immediately, and follow the instructions to “[Prepare a bird for transport](http://nativesongbirdcare.org/I_found_a_bird.html#anchor_transport)”.

**NOTE:**Without proper licenses from State Departments of Fish and Game and US Fish and Wildlife Services, it is unlawful to possess a live or dead native bird, feather or egg. Please refer to Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife and The Federal Migratory Bird Act for more info.

Wild native songbirds have very specific dietary needs, requirements for housing, care and release back to the wild.  The internet is filled with misinformation, even some grossly irresponsible information, and should not be utilized for advice about hand-raising any wildlife.  It is also important to remember that raising wild native birds is in no way similar to raising domestic pet birds, regardless of advice provided by a health professional for domestic animals or a pet store.  Baby birds that are raised by well-meaning, but misinformed untrained people result in very poor health, disease and often irreversible habituation and/or imprinting. These things  will lead to the unfortunate and unnecessary death of the bird.  So, if you’ve taken the first step to do the right thing for the bird by rescuing it, please complete the process and bring it to a licensed wildlife facility where it can receive proper medical and supportive care by a trained professional.

If you find an injured, orphaned or ill bird, please call us so that we may provide the proper medical care by our fully licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Donna Nespoli of Colorado Native Bird Care and Conservation (CNBCC) has current state and federal licenses to care for birds and small mammals.