

Baby Birds: The Facts

Nestlings vs. Fledglings

A nestling is a baby bird that is pink with very little or no feathers. It still needs to be in the nest.

A fledgling is a baby bird that has some feathers and can hop around. Its parents have pushed it out of the nest on purpose to help it learn how to fly.



Nestlings



A fledgling

What to Do

No one can care for a baby bird like the parent birds, not even an experienced rehabber. If you find a baby bird, please try to locate the nest and put it back in the nest. Or if the bird is a fledgling please do not disturb it; it is probably learning how to fly.

A nestling or fledgling should be brought into the shelter if it is obvious that after several hours there is no parent bird nearby. Usually the parents are nearby; you just cannot see them; they will go back and forth, getting food, etc.

Fledglings may spend at least 7-10 days on the ground hopping around or only being able to fly short distances while the parents are teaching them how to fly.

If a bird is found in the street or in any other unusual or potentially dangerous place, it's best to place it under the nearest bush if there is no obvious nest nearby or if the nest cannot be reached.

If it is clear that a bird is truly an orphan (nest was destroyed, parents found dead), then it is fine to bring the bird into the shelter so it can be transported to a rehabber. Carefully scoop it up into a shoebox and transport it directly to the shelter.

Remember, however, nestlings (tiny pinkies) are much better off being placed back in the nest where the parents can care for it unless you are absolutely sure the parents are dead. It is NOT true that the parents will smell the scent of humans on their baby and then reject it. If there is no way to reach the

nest, hanging a basket in the tree or nearby bush can be a substitute. Just be sure that whatever you use to create a makeshift nest, that it has proper drainage so it doesn't flood with water during the rain.

Fledglings are absolutely better off being left alone because the parent birds are feeding them and teaching them how to get food on their own. It is sometimes difficult for a rehabber to find food that the fledgling will eat and some birds simply will not eat in captivity. If they do not eat, they will not survive.

If the baby bird is obviously injured it should be brought into the shelter immediately to prevent further injury or suffering.