



Lake Erie Nature & Science Center

DOES BABY WILDLIFE NEED OUR HELP?

Fast Facts:

- Baby wildlife is rarely abandoned in nature. Mothers will often leave their young unattended for hours for a variety of reasons.
- Baby animals do not need to be protected from the natural dangers in their lives. Children, predators and automobiles are all a natural part of their urban and suburban environments. Baby wildlife must grow up among these circumstances in order to learn how to successfully co-exist with them. Growing up in the wild is dangerous, but removing animals from their parents can be equally as detrimental to their survival.
- Please do not feed baby animals. Each species requires a specialized diet and feeding an animal the wrong food can be harmful to its health.
- Wild animals will not abandon their babies due to the scent of humans. In fact, most birds have little sense of smell! While mammals have a strong sense of smell, human scent is not nearly enough of a danger signal to cause mothers to abandon their hormonal and maternal behaviors.
- Baby animals will never receive the same quality of care from humans as they would receive from their natural parents. Human care, to some extent, is always damaging to the animal. For this reason, human intervention should be the last resort.

Eastern Cottontail Rabbits



Eastern Cottontail Rabbits often build their nesting sites in yards and open spaces. Baby bunnies are almost never abandoned, even when they are all alone. If you stumble across one of their nests, do not move the baby bunnies because their mother will be unable to find them. She will return at dusk and dawn to feed and groom her babies. Keep in mind that cottontails regularly survive in suburban areas even with dangers such as pets, predators and automobiles.

White-tailed Deer



A fawn lying quietly by itself with no mother in sight is perfectly normal. Deer do this to protect their young, as the presence of an adult would attract the attention of predators. Even if the fawn seems to be in a "dangerous" location, do not move it as the mother probably will not be able to find her baby. If a fawn is walking around and making noise, this is a sign that it may be abandoned and in need of assistance.

If you have found baby wildlife and are wondering if it needs help, please call the Center's expert wildlife staff at 440-471-8357 before intervening.

**Always call Lake Erie Nature & Science Center at 440-471-8357
before intervening. Open daily 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Birds



A baby bird with skin still visible or only covered in downy feathers should be placed back in the nest or in an artificial nest. If fully feathered but unable to fly, the bird is a fledgling that should be left alone as it is in the process of learning critical survival behaviors.

Raccoons and Squirrels



Raccoons and squirrels will frequently retrieve their babies when they end up out of the nest too early. They often maintain more than one nest or den site and will move their babies as needed. If a baby is found out of its nest and is not yet able to climb on its own,

place it in an open container off the ground and give plenty of time to allow the mother to retrieve her baby.

Waterfowl



Young ducks and geese can become separated from their families when following parents to water. Search nearby water locations and return the baby to its family, if possible. Ducks often nest miles from water, even in parking lots and suburban yards, and can

successfully walk their babies to the nearest water source on their own.

Opossums



Opossums are North America's only marsupials, which means they keep their babies in a pouch. Shortly after the babies leave their mother's pouch at around 3 months old, they are completely independent. Opossum babies at this age should be left alone.

Younger opossums may need human assistance – always call a wildlife rehabber before intervening.

Birds of Prey



A baby bird of prey that cannot yet grasp with its talons needs to be placed back in its original nest or in an artificial nest in the exact area it was found. If the young bird can grip with its talons, it should be placed on a branch at the nest site. Its parents will return and continue

caring for it.

Found an injured animal?

Never put your own safety at risk trying to help wildlife. If you can safely capture the injured animal, place it in an escape proof box (with air holes) not much bigger than the animal itself. Do not offer food or water as it may harm or even kill the animal. Place the box in a dark, quiet location until it can be transported to the Center for a free medical examination every day between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.