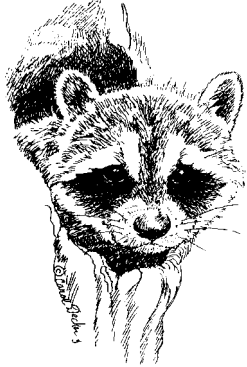


Questions Frequently Asked About Young Wildlife

Q. A moment ago, I accidentally kicked open a nest of baby rabbits while walking in the thick grass at the far corner of my backyard. They seem so helpless. I waited, but saw no sign of their mother. Should I rescue them?

A. No. The mother would not return as long as you remained at the nest. Just replace the top of the nest that you uncovered and leave. The mother will return and care for the young. Cottontail rabbits leave their young for hours while eating, but they do return to nurse the young.



Q. A baby bird fell out of its nest that is in a tree in my backyard. I am afraid something might happen to it if I leave it here on the ground. Should I bring it into the house and feed it until it is able to fly?

A. No. The best thing to do is put the bird carefully back into the nest. Don't worry about getting your scent on the bird; it will not affect the mother's care. If you find that the nest has fallen from the tree, put the nest back in the tree securely along with the nestling. If you cannot find or reach the nest, put the young bird into a small box or basket and set it at a lower point in the tree. The adults will care for the chicks and they will be safe from ground predators.

Q. A few minutes ago, I was walking through the woods and saw several baby raccoons on the ground near a large hollow tree. I wonder if they fell out of the hole way up in the tree and the mother has abandoned them because she can't put them back in their nest. Should I bring them home and care for them?

A. No. Most likely, the young raccoons are merely exploring and their mother is nearby. They are probably old enough to be fully capable of climbing back up the tree to their den when they are ready to return. If they are too young to climb, the mother will carry them back.

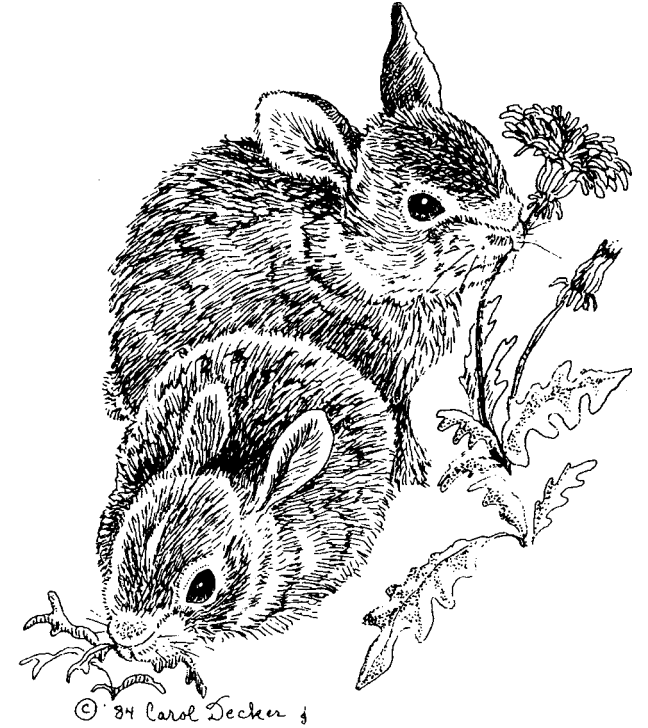
Q. This morning I found an abandoned fawn near the edge of a field on my property. I brought the fawn into my house to save it, but I don't know how to care for it. What should I do?

A. Immediately take the fawn back to the spot where you found it, and leave it there. The mother should come back again looking for the fawn. Even one to two days after removal from the wild, fawns have been successfully reunited with their mothers by returning them to the place where they were found. When you picked up the fawn, the mother was probably eating not far away. Usually young fawns are quite safe when left alone because their color pattern and lack of scent help them to remain undetected until their mother's return.



N. J. Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Fish and Wildlife
P.O. Box 400
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400

Born To Be Wild



If you care . . .

Leave them there!

NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Fish & Wildlife

Go Wild at Tax Time – Check of for Wildlife on NJ State Tax Form

BORN TO BE WILD

Help keep them wild!

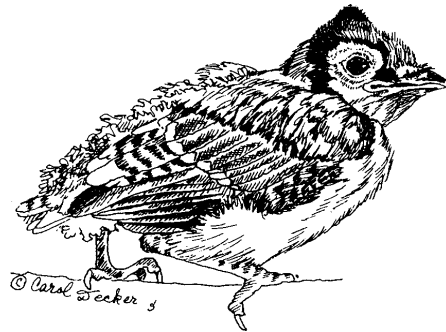
Every year during the spring and early summer, the lives of many young animals are disrupted. People encountering young wild animals attempt to "save" them. Chances are the mother was close by, helplessly watching as her young were taken. Although well meaning, efforts to "save" these babies often do more harm than good. If not properly handled or raised these "saved" animals may be sentenced to a lifetime of captivity or reduced chances of survival in the wild.

It's a normal human instinct to want to care for a helpless-looking young animal that is found. These newborn or newly-hatched youngsters venturing into the world on shaky legs and untried wings are often learning survival skills from their parents. The perils of survival are part of the natural world around us. Some young wildlife will not survive. However, the ones that do survive are usually the most fit for their environment and to perpetuate the species.

Instinctively, some animals quickly develop the skills they need to survive. Ducklings are walking and feeding moments after they're born. Robins, on the other hand, spend weeks in the nest being fed by their parents before they'll go out on their own. Other animals develop survival skills over a longer period of time. Young raccoons must remain with their mother in a family group throughout summer and into the winter learning how to survive.

It is during this important developmental stage when many baby animals are found and thought to be orphaned. Many people assume that young wildlife seen without a

parent have been abandoned. They believe the young animals are helpless and need to be saved. These acts of kindness often decrease the animal's chances of survival and leading a natural life in the wild. When young animals are removed from the wild they are denied the most important natural learning experiences. Worse, most people quickly find they do not really know how to care for young animals.



If the young animals do survive in captivity and are released back into the wild, they have missed the experiences that help them to fend for themselves and are more likely to perish. Their ability to find natural foods is limited. Their defenses against predators are lacking. And they may find themselves an unwelcome intruder in the territory of another member of their species.

Often, care given to young wildlife by untrained individuals unavoidably results in some attachment to people. Upon release into the wild, those animals generally have little fear of humans. Some return to places where people live, only to be attacked by domestic animals or to be hit by cars. Some become nuisances getting into stored food, trash cans or dwellings. People have also been injured by once-tamed wildlife.

WHAT TO DO

Leave them alone!

You can actually increase young wildlife's chances of survival by following one simple rule when finding them: LEAVE THEM ALONE! It may be difficult to do, but this is the real act of kindness. In nearly all cases, young wildlife do not need to be saved. Resist the temptation to help them. Only when they are found injured or with their dead mother is there reason to do something, and the State's wildlife law is specific about what may be done legally.

State law protects nearly all wild birds and mammals. They may not be legally taken from the wild or kept in captivity. Never consider them as possible pets; it is both illegal and unwise. They are wild animals that belong in the wild. However, a distressed or injured wild animal may legally be kept temporarily with the permission of the Division (other than a potentially dangerous species) provided that:

1. The Division of Fish and Wildlife law enforcement office in your area, DEP Emergency Hotline, or the Wildlife Control Unit is notified of the situation within 12 hours, and
2. The Division's Wildlife Control Unit prescribes a course of action that is in the best interest of the animal. Normally the problem will be referred to a wildlife rehabilitator who has the required experience, permits and facilities to properly care for injured and distressed wildlife.
3. See the list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators at www.njfishandwildlife.com/rehablst.htm

Please contact:

Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife

Wildlife Control Unit
Clinton Wildlife Management Area
141 Van Syckel's Road
Hampton, NJ 08827
908-735-8793

Endangered and Nongame Species Program
PO Box 400
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400
609-292-9400

Northern Region Law Enforcement Office
26 Rte. 173 West
Hampton, NJ 08827
908-735-8240

Central Region Law Enforcement Office
One Eldridge Road
Robbinsville, NJ 08691
609-259-2120

Southern Region Law Enforcement Office
220 Blue Anchor Rd.
Sicklerville, NJ 08081
856-629-0555

DEP Hotline

877-WARN-DEP



The Division of Fish and Wildlife is a professional, environmental organization dedicated to the protection, management and wise use of the state's fish and wildlife resources.