

## RESCUING BABY SONGBIRDS

First make sure they really are orphans!!!

### NEST OUT OF TREE:

If a nest is found on the ground with babies inside, try to return the nest to the tree it fell from. (Even a tree in the near vicinity will be OK.) Sometimes you will need to use some screening or support to keep the nest in the tree, just be sure not to use fishing line or string that the birds could become entangled in. Be sure all rough edges of wire are turned so the adult birds or babies don't come in contact with them.

### BABY BIRD OUT OF NEST:

**FEW TO NO FEATHERS:** Examine for injuries. If injured call a veterinarian. If no injuries, find the nest that it fell out of and, if possible, place him back in the nest. It is NOT TRUE that the adult bird will not take its baby back after it has been touched by a human. **THEY WILL TAKE HIM BACK** and it's the best thing for the baby! If the nest is too far up in the tree to place the baby back safely, then you have an orphan--see care instructions below.

### ORPHANS:

If injured, call a veterinarian or wildlife rescue organization!

**DOWNY FEATHERS OR ONLY A FEW QUILLS SHOWING:** Try to place him back into the nest. If the nest is unobtainable--see care instructions below.

**ADULT PLUMMAGE:** Chances are mom or dad may be working with him to teach him to fly. Go to an area away from the baby where you won't be seen but can observe the baby and watch for 20-30 minutes. If you can't see the parents after this length of time you probably have an orphan. The primary care these babies need is protection from predators until they learn to fly. A large aviary is recommended, constructed with wood slats (wire can damage feathers). Confine him in a LARGE cardboard box with newspaper on the bottom in a draft free quiet area until you can build a better cage.

### ORPHANS WITH NO FEATHERS TO DOWNY FEATHERS:

#### HOUSING:

Materials needed: -Medium size cardboard box

the -Small plastic vegetable box (the kind strawberries & blueberries come in at store)

-Heating pad

Line cardboard box with newspaper. Line plastic vegetable box with Kleenex or paper toweling (NO CLOTH) to make "nesting material". Fill 1/2 full with Kleenex, then use Kleenex to make a "nest" like mother makes, a shallow area in the middle and raised around the edges so baby can

sit in the middle and rest his head on the edges. Baby birds need this support so they don't strain their necks or legs. Arrange until he appears comfortable. After feedings, the baby should be able to raise his "bottom" over the edge to defecate out of the nest.

For tiny baby birds with no feathers, place a heating pad inside or under the box. Unfeathered birds should be kept at a temperature between 85-90 degrees. Be sure baby is protected from drafts.

#### FEEDING:

Basic formula: For Blue Jays, Starlings, Mockingbirds, Sparrows, and Tohees.

When possible, use a commercial formula available through your veterinarian. Following is a basic formula which you can make at home.

Formula from Felicidades Wildlife Foundation:

3 cups turkey starter (or game starter)

3 tablespoons Vionate (powdered vit./min. supplement; check with veterinarian for substitute)

1 tablespoon bone meal (from health food store)

1 tablespoon protein powder (unflavored, from health food store)

12 100mg tablets Vitamin B1, crushed to powder (health food store)

Mix well and store in plastic bags in freezer until needed.

Mix small amount as needed with warm water to a moist consistency. If too wet or too dry it will fall off feeding stick. Bear in mind that baby birds do not drink water, moisture is obtained from their food. Mix a fresh batch 2-3 times a day. This mixture sours quickly so make up only small amounts at a time and discard when sour.

Insectivorous formula: For Purple Martins, Nighthawks, Chimney Swifts, Swallows, Crows, Magpie, Ravens, Robins, and Woodpeckers.

Mix same as above for Basic Formula but add lean ground beef such as ground chuck or ground round steak. (NOT HAMBURGER--too fatty)

Mix 1/2 cup of Basic Formula Mixture with 1/4lb ground round.

#### FEEDING METHODS:

Feed featherless nestlings every 20 minutes throughout the day from 7:00 A.M. to 7-8:00 P.M. If you must leave the house for an errand, feed later on into the evening but try not to leave for an extended amount of time. Feed as much as the bird will take per feeding, watching crop size so it doesn't overfill. Usually baby will know how much he can eat but there's a "glutton" in every group. Lengthen time between feedings as bird grows.

Use a Q-tip swab stick (cotton completely removed). Dip into mixture and obtain a little on the stick. Tap the edge of the nest or gently tap the baby on the head and he should gape. Then place

the stick with the food gently into his mouth--he should grab at it and swallow.

As soon as the bird starts to get feathers he will start to move around more in the nest. As soon as he tries to venture out on his own you'll need to provide a larger area for him. The enclosure should be large enough for him to hop around in and to flutter without damaging his wings. Domestic bird cages are OK for young birds but as soon as they start to flutter and use their wings you must get them into a large aviary. Damage to feathers, on wings and tail, can greatly affect flight, if not halt it altogether.

Feeding at this stage should be the same diet but the mixture, still moistened, can be placed in a dish deep enough so the bird can eat without damaging his beak. You may need to feed him from the dish until he gets the hang of it. It is good to start on some natural foods and to place a non-spill water dish in the enclosure too.

As soon as the bird is FULLY FEATHERED (with no feather damage), is EATING ON HIS OWN, and is starting to flutter about, it is time to get him in a large outdoor aviary. Wire cages are discouraged at this point as they can cause feather damage and birds sometimes try to fly into the sides. It is best to contact someone who has had experience raising and releasing songbirds for help.

### WARNINGS!!!

--One of the biggest problems in raising baby birds is keeping the family pet away from them. Dogs and cats KILL baby birds if given the opportunity.

--Try not to handle the bird any more than necessary. Hold him over a table in case he leaps from your hand and falls to the floor. Falls can result in fractures and possibly even death.

--BABY BIRDS DO IMPRINT ON PEOPLE! If at all possible try to have only one person do all the feedings. As soon as the bird is completely feathered and eating on his own he should be moved to an outdoor aviary to adapt to outdoor environment, to learn to fly, and to get away from human contact.

### NOTE:

Pigeons and Doves require special diet and feeding methods. It is best to contact a person who has had experience raising these babies.