

**Be bird smart this spring with Wellington SPCA**



[Robin nestling/Zimmerman]



[Robin fledgling/Jones]

Each year Wellington SPCA receives hundreds of calls from members of the public who are concerned for baby and young birds that they have found out of the nest. In the majority of cases these birds are uninjured and are not in need of any extra care. In fact, they have a much better chance of surviving to adulthood if they are left in their own environment.

Wellington SPCA has compiled a list of 10 key points about baby and young birds to help you decide what to do if you find a baby bird out of its nest that you are concerned about.

1. If you find an injured or bleeding bird, place it in a warm dark box and take it to your nearest vet clinic or SPCA immediately, where it will be cared for at no cost to you.
2. Most New Zealand garden birds have chicks that fledge. Therefore, just because a bird is on the ground and is unable to fly, does not mean it is injured or in need of help.
3. If you are concerned for an uninjured baby bird, try to determine if it is a **nestling** or a **fledgling**. The easiest way to tell is that a **nestling** will have very few feathers and pinky/blue skin and will not be able to walk. A **fledgling** will be mostly fully feathered and is able to stand up and walk.
4. **Nestlings** need to be placed back in the nest, as this is their best chance of survival. Try to find the nest in nearby trees or bushes, taking extra care not to disturb the nest or any other chicks that may be in it. If you cannot find the nest, make a temporary nest out of a container (an ice cream container is good). Place some soft bedding material in the container along with the nestling and secure it to a nearby tree. Leave the area and monitor the bird for a few hours from a distance. The parent birds will most likely return once you have left to continue to care for the chick.

5. **Fledglings** that are uninjured are supposed to be on the ground - after hatching they can spend up to two weeks on the ground before they can fly. The parent birds will be somewhere close by finding food for themselves and their chicks and protecting the fledglings from predators. It is best to leave these fledglings alone and let the parents handle the situation. The only time you should move a fledgling is if you find it in a potentially hazardous location e.g. a busy footpath or carpark. In this case, carefully move the chick somewhere close by that is more suitable, like a bushy area with some vegetation cover.
6. Birds have a very poor sense of smell. If you need to handle a baby bird, don't worry - the parents will not reject it because of this.
7. What about cats? Cats can and do catch birds. Wellington SPCA is not in a position to prevent this happening and we recommend that if you own a cat and know there are baby birds in your yard or garden, keep your cats inside when possible. Generally, chicks will have fledged and be out of danger in a few days. Baby birds have a very high mortality rate in any unnatural environment, like an animal shelter for example. The best chance of survival for a baby bird is to be left in its own natural habitat.
8. What about ducklings? The same general rules apply for ducklings as for garden birds. If the parents are around it is best to do nothing. If you are absolutely sure the bird is lost from its parent, you can place it in a box with a covered hot water bottle or similar, and take it to your nearest vet clinic or SPCA who will care for it free of charge. The biggest killer of ducklings is the cold. They are not yet waterproofed and should be kept away from any sizeable water source without their mother. If you need to transport a duckling to get help, it is imperative that the duckling is kept warm.
9. What about feeding? It is not recommended that you attempt to foster or care for a baby bird unless you have experience and knowledge about what is involved. Young birds need to be fed every 15 to 20 minutes from sunrise to sunset. Most people are not able to provide this much time and effort in raising young birds.
10. To get more information about baby birds you can check out the following websites:

[http://www.wild-bird-watching.com/Baby\\_Birds.html](http://www.wild-bird-watching.com/Baby_Birds.html)

<http://www.nature.net/forums/bird/bird911.html>

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/advice4.htm>

<http://www.wildbirdcarecentre.org/english/rescuer.html>

<http://prettybirds.net/Wildbirdfoundtips.htm>