I Found a Baby Bird

Wild birds live among us in our gardens and parks. Sometimes they need our help and sometimes they don’t. How do you tell?

Is the bird sick or hurt?
(Is it bleeding, unable to flutter its wings, are its wings drooping unevenly, is it weak or shivering, has it been attacked by a cat or dog?)

No
Yes

Call WildCare 415-456-SAVE (7283)

Is the bird feathered?

No
Yes

It’s a nestling
It needs help! Can you find the nest? Is it intact?

No
Yes

Make a nest
Use a berry basket or margarine tub. Line it with dry grass, the old nest, or pine needles; hang it from the original or a nearby tree.

Put the baby in the nest
Observe from a distance for an hour. Are the parents visiting the nest?

No
Yes

Put the bird in a bush or on a nearby tree limb.
Watch from a distance for an hour. Are the parents nearby?

No
Yes

Leave the area
Baby is okay.

Call WildCare 415-456-SAVE (7283)

Fact or Myth?

1. Birds can smell the scent of humans on a baby that has been handled.
   - Fact
   - Myth
   Myth. Birds’ sense of smell is not well understood, but it is clear they show no fear of babies that have been touched by humans.

2. Birds recognize their babies’ voices and will come when they call.
   - Fact
   - Myth
   Fact. Parent birds respond to the begging calls of their young, and will feed them if they can reach their babies.

3. Birds carry diseases that can be transmitted to people.
   - Fact
   - Myth
   Fact. Birds can carry a number of parasites, bacterial, fungal and viral infections that can affect people. If you have handled a wild bird, you should wash your hands and other objects the bird has been in contact with.

4. A bird that has been caught by a cat should be let go if it can still fly.
   - Fact
   - Myth
   Myth. Cats’ teeth cause nearly invisible puncture wounds on their prey. The bacteria from their saliva in these wounds can cause deadly infections 3-5 days later. Birds caught by a cat should be brought to the Songbird Hospital.

5. It is illegal to keep a wild animal without a permit, even if you are trying to care for it and plan to release it.
   - Fact
   - Myth
   Fact. Wild animal care requires very specific skill and knowledge sets. Wildlife rehabilitators are licensed by the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife to rehabilitate wildlife, and are the only ones permitted to treat wild animals. This ensures the best chance for their survival.

6. Orphaned baby birds like to be cuddled and talked to.
   - Fact
   - Myth
   Myth. They are terrified of us and think we are predators. Not being able to see or hear us helps calm them.