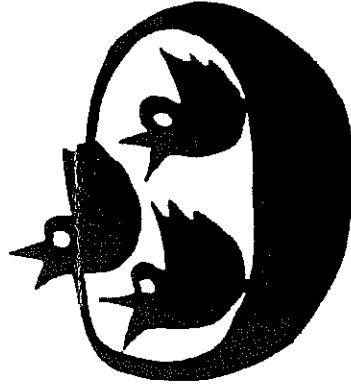


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THE STORY OF BABY BIRDS



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THE NEST



The story of baby birds begins with the nest. Each spring our wild birds build nests in order to have cozy places to lay eggs and raise their families.

Some birds make their nests on tree branches or in bushes. Others nest on buildings or in chimneys. A few will even nest in unused boats or cars! Certain birds such as woodpeckers raise their babies inside hollow trees.

Wild birds use many different building materials to make their nests strong and comfortable. Some birds use twigs, while others use grass, mud, feathers, and even human hair.

It takes 1-2 weeks to build the nest. After the nest is done, the mother bird lays one egg each day for 4-5 days. The parents take turns sitting on the eggs to keep them warm. The eggs hatch in 10-14 days.

THE HATCHLINGS AND NESTLINGS



Nearly all baby birds are naked and blind when they come out of the egg. They are called hatchlings. Their parents must keep them warm and feed them every 15 minutes during the day!

Until you can get the bird to help, keep it quiet and warm on a towel in a box. Never give water or milk to a baby bird.

You should not try to raise a baby wild bird yourself. It is against the law to keep wild birds. They can die or be harmed by the wrong food or incorrect handling. Some may need medicine, or to be in an incubator. Most wild baby birds must be fed every 15 minutes for 12-16 hours a day!

HOW YOU CAN HELP PREVENT PROBLEMS FOR BIRDS



We can help our wild birds in many ways. It is important to leave nests alone, and keep pets away from the babies. Baby birds will jump out of the nest too early if disturbed.

Keeping cats indoors, especially during the day in the spring and summer will save many birds.

By waiting until fall to remove bushes or dead trees you can help a nest of baby birds to fledge.

SPRING IS COMING

Now that you know the story of baby birds, this spring you can watch (but not too close) as the wild birds grow in your neighborhood!

The bucket should be at least 5-6 feet from the ground, and not in direct sun.

Then hide and watch to make sure that the parents feed the young birds. If the adults don't come for 3-4 hours or if the babies are hurt, they will have to be raised by a Wildlife Specialist.

WHAT TO DO IF THE BABIES ARE HURT OR THE PARENTS ARE GONE



If a young bird is cold, weak, or bloody, it is hurt and needs help. A bird that limps, falls over, or has one wing that droops also needs help.

When you find a baby bird that is hurt or has not been fed by its parents for 3-4 hours, you should call a Wildlife Specialist.

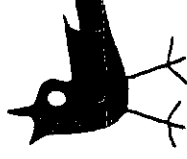
Licensed Wildlife Specialists or Wildlife Rehabilitators know how to help wild baby birds that are hurt or sick. Rehabilitators also know how to raise baby birds if the parents are gone.

You can find the names of rehabilitators or wildlife clinics by calling the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the Audubon Society, and most veterinarians.

Most young birds ask for food by opening their beaks and peeping. This is called gaping or food begging. The parents put food into the babies' mouths. Each type of bird eats a different food. Some eat bugs, some eat berries, and some will eat seed when they are older. The adults know just what to feed the babies.

Soon their eyes open and feathers start to grow, and then the babies are called nestlings. The new feathers are called blood quills or pin feathers. These new feathers look like shiny blue tubes. The nestlings' tails are just starting to grow and are less than 1/2 inch long.

THE FLEDGLINGS



Birds that are two weeks old are called fledglings. They have grown so fast that now they have feathers, and a tail that's about 1/2 inch long. The fledglings are curious and want to explore the world. They leave the nest even though they cannot fly yet or eat on their own.

The fledglings hop on the ground and call to their parents to be fed. It will take the fledglings a few days to be able to fly up to low branches. It will take two weeks for them to learn to feed themselves.

The parents show the young how to find food and what to eat. The adult birds make loud noises to warn the fledglings when danger is nearby.

THE JUVENILES



After two more weeks the babies are as big as adults and can fly well. They have long tails and are now called juveniles. Some will still beg to their parents for food even though they can eat on their own!

Soon the parent birds prepare for their next group of babies. Most birds can only have families in the spring and summer, and will have 2-3 nests of young during this time of year.

IF YOU FIND A BABY BIRD

If you find a baby bird it is always best to return it to the parents. The adults will not hurt the young bird if you have touched it. They have no sense of smell and will not detect your scent. The parents have worked very hard to raise their family. They know each baby and each baby's voice.

When a baby bird falls from a nest and you can reach the nest, you should put it back. Be certain that it is the right nest. Make sure that the baby is healthy and not hurt.

Watch from a distance to see that the parents feed the nestling after you put it back into the nest.

A healthy nestling should feel warm. It should be active and alert, and have bright eyes. The tail will be less than 1/2 inch long. Baby birds are always ready to eat and may even beg to you for food!

If you find a healthy fledgling on the ground you should keep people and pets away from it. A fledgling has more feathers and a longer tail than a nestling. It should be able to hop well. Hide and watch to be sure that the fledgling is being fed by its parents about every 30 minutes.

HOW TO MAKE A SUBSTITUTE NEST



If a hatchling or nestling bird has fallen and you can't reach the nest or the whole nest has come down, you can make a substitute nest.

Punch drainage holes in the bottom of a large plastic bucket. Place the nest and babies in the bottom of the bucket. If you don't have the old nest or the old nest is wet, put twigs and dry leaves under the babies. Secure the bucket close to where the original nest was by nailing or wiring it in place.