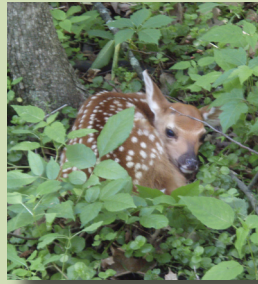


Creature Feature Baby Animals

Baby birds, baby rabbits, fawns, and many other animal babies are abundant in the spring. So what do you do if you encounter a baby animal that seems all alone? The best course of action is to do nothing. Yes, that's right, leave the baby alone, because chances are, there isn't actually anything wrong.



Unlike human babies, many animal babies are meant to spend long periods of time alone without their parents. A mother rabbit will only visit her nest once or twice in a 24 hour period and fawns are left on their own all day long. The absence of the mother actually protects these young from detection by predators. And if the parents see you, a perceived predator, hanging around their young, they will certainly stay away in order to avoid leading you to their offspring.



Many people also become concerned when they find young birds unable to fly. This too is a normal developmental stage. Just as human toddlers aren't experts in walking overnight, flying takes practice. And although it looks as though the parents have left, they are still providing food to these fledglings. However, they may have 4 little ones spread out around the neighborhood and they will avoid visiting one if there

is a potential predator (you again) nearby. If you are really concerned about these little ones, you can help them into a shrub or tree to protect them from ground predators, but since they want to practice flying they are unlikely to stay put.

Life is not easy for young animals of any species, but oftentimes our interference does more damage than good. So if you find a wild baby, take a peek, enjoy the moment, and then move on so that you don't disturb them during this critical time in their lives. We encourage you to let nature take its course, as many other animals depend on weak, injured, or young animals for their own well-being.

Nature Notes

The most important thing you can do to help baby animals is to keep your cats indoors and your dogs in your yard or on a leash. Even if a wound inflicted by a pet is minor, the stress of the event and subsequent care, along with bacterial infections from cat bites, make survival rates low.



Another way you can assist wildlife in raising their young is by providing places for them to hide in your yard. Small brush piles, native trees and shrubs, and tall grasses all offer welcome hideouts for young.

If an animal is truly injured or orphaned and you are uncomfortable letting nature take its course, there are some licensed wildlife rehabilitators in the area. In order to raise native bird species or mammals, rehabbers must hold permits issued by the state or federal government. For a list of licensed rehabilitators, check out www.michigandnr.com/dlr/.

Visit the Visitor Center Office for program information.

This inSTALLation is available online at www.chippewanaturecenter.org under the Naturalist Section.