

WILDLIFE BEHAVIOR TIPS

I FOUND A BABY SQUIRREL.

Mother squirrels will often retrieve their babies and return them to the nest. Squirrels also make alternate nests, so retrieval can occur even if the original nest has been destroyed. If the squirrel is not injured (no blood, bruises or fly eggs), place him in a box in a safe location, as near as possible to where the baby was found. Put a hot water bottle covered with fabric in the box to keep the baby warm. The box should not be so tall as to prevent mom from jumping in and out with the baby in her mouth. Do not wrap the baby in fabric as mom will want to retrieve him quickly. Keep the baby in the warm box for up to eight hours (you will likely have to change the hot water bottle during this time). If mom does not retrieve after 6 to 8 hours, the baby will need to be taken to a wildlife rehabilitation center.



A BIRD SEEMS TO BE ATTACKING MY WINDOW.

The bird can see her reflection in the glass and perceives herself as another intruding bird. You can draw your curtains or pull your shade to change the reflections. Yes, a bird can injure herself by doing this. If the behavior continues, try soaping the window or attaching predator decals or paper streamers to the outside of the window. This will distract the bird and the noise from the streamers may scare her away.

A WOODPECKER IS PECKING ON MY HOUSE.

Sometimes this is a territorial claim, especially on raingutters, where a loud noise resonates when the bird pecks. Often, however, the bird can hear bugs in your soffets or roof and he is attempting to uncover them. It's a good idea to bring in a bug specialist when a woodpecker begins viewing your house as dinner.

A DUCK BROUGHT HER BABIES TO MY POOL AND WON'T LEAVE.

The babies may not be able to climb out since the sides are vertical cliffs to ducklings. The chlorine water won't kill the babies. They will be able to fly in just a few weeks after hatching. You can offer them a "ramp" to exit the pool, and if you are willing to feed them while in your pool, they will grow faster and leave sooner.

THERE'S A SKUNK IN MY WINDOW WELL OR AN OPOSSUM IN MY GARBAGE CAN.

Simply put a wooden board at an angle into the window well so that the skunk can climb out at night. Skunks have poor vision, so approach slowly and unless the skunk begins pounding with her feet or turns her tail towards you, don't worry about getting sprayed. The skunk probably won't leave until dark, however. Ditto with the opossum.



You can gently tip the garbage can onto its side, but the opossum may be too frightened to move (hence the saying, "playing opossum"). Opossums are one of the gentlest creatures, but their impressive set of teeth, scare even the bravest soul. Unfortunately, when frightened the opossum opens his mouth to breathe (like hyperventilating) and begins to drool. Folks confuse this with "rabid frothing" when in fact the little guy is scared to death. If you care to notice, he's also just wet and dirtied himself too. Opossums are also sensitive to sound. If waiting it out is not an option, try crumpling a plastic bag near the opossum, as they hate the noise. She should leave on her own. Visit Opossum Society of the United States at <http://www.opossumsocietyus.org> for more info.

THERE'S A BAT IN MY HOUSE.

Do not attempt to chase her or catch her. Close the door to the room the bat is in, open a window, and the bat will fly out. If the bat lands on a surface, wearing gloves to protect yourself, gently place a container (like a container from Cool Whip) over the bat, then slide a piece of stiff cardboard between the bat and the surface. Take the bat outside and place her on an elevated surface like a roof or on tree bark. Do not put her on flat ground as she will be landlocked. Bats need air under their wings and must drop down in order to take flight.

I'VE FOUND A BABY BIRD (UNFEATHERED) ON THE GROUND.

If you do not see injuries (blood, bruising, fly eggs), look for the nest and place the bird back inside the nest. If you see a nest, but it is too high to reach, you can make an alternate nest (mother birds will tend two nests). Use a porous container like a wicker basket or those little green berry baskets and place a porous medium into the container (like dried grass or leaves). Secure it as high into the tree as possible using rope or twine. Watch from a distance to see whether an adult approaches the nest within an hour. If not, get the bird to a rehab center.

I'VE FOUND AN INJURED BIRD ON THE GROUND.

Are you sure that the bird is injured and not a fledge (a young bird who cannot yet fly)? Can the bird hop, flap his wings and take short flights? Can he perch? Is he energetic? Listen and watch to see if adult birds are interacting with him. Many songbirds spend 3 to 5 days on the ground after leaving the nest before they become proficient flyers. This is a critical time when parents teach their offspring to hunt by sight and sound. A high percentage of fledges brought to rehab center are perfectly healthy and just days away from flying.



I'VE FOUND AN ORPHANED NEST OF BUNNIES IN MY YARD.

Mother bunny is likely nearby in a bush keeping watch. Because rabbits have no defense, they do not stay with their young which would attract predators. Instead, they come to the nest and nurse their babies in early morning and evening. Do not move or disturb the babies. To confirm that the mother is coming to the nest (you're not likely to see her), place the babies back in the nest (if they have been removed), cover them with the nesting material and cross some colored yarn or twigs over the top in a recognizable pattern. Check the nest in 24 hours. If the yarn/twigs have been disturbed you know the mother has been to feed her babies. If not, get the babies to a rehab center.

THE NEST IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE YARD/TRAFFIC, AND I DON'T WANT TO MOW OVER IT, OR I HAVE A DOG/CAT.

Since mom only visits in the early morning and evening hours, you can cover the nest with a breathable container (like a wicker laundry basket) and weight it down so your dog can't move it. Or, you can put chicken wire around the nest with stakes. During the days when kids and dogs/cats are outside, keep the wire down. In early evening, lift the wire all around about 12 inches so that mom can come to nurse at night and again in the morning.



A TURTLE IS CROSSING A BUSY ROAD.

There are two reasons why turtles cross roads. Water turtles, like a Snapper (large with pointy ridges on the tail), are going to a spot to lay eggs. Land turtles, like a Box (smallish turtle with a high dome shell), are foraging or trying to return to their original territory. Be careful when handling a snapping turtle as he can inflict a nasty bite. Do not offer him anything hard to bite on and do not pick him up by the tail. Gently push the turtle along with a stick or move him into a box. Always move the turtle to the side of the road where he was heading.

I WANT TO HAVE A WILD ANIMAL REMOVED FROM MY PROPERTY.

Trapping/relocation is not a solution to most problems. Removing an animal is like putting a vacancy sign up on one's lawn. Another animal will surely move into that open territory. Relocated animals put into saturated territories will likely be attacked as interlopers or die of starvation or exposure to elements. Also, the worst time to trap/relocate is the spring and summer when babies are born. If their mom is relocated, they will starve to death. For tips on Living with Wildlife, please contact us at 732-446-6808 for a free brochure.

If you find an injured or truly orphaned animal and are unable to reach a wildlife rehabilitator, keep the animal in a warm, dark, quiet location. Do not attempt to give food. If the animal is in extreme pain, you can contact a vet who can provide care for 24 hours before the animal must be transferred to a wildlife facility.

Wild animals surround us not because they want to but because we have taken away their land. They'll leave us alone if we do the same to them. With a little understanding and patience, people and animals can peacefully coexist.

Information provided by Brenda Malinics, an experienced wildlife rehabber