

Hey, I found a baby bird!



April until June is the prime time that most birds and mammals have their young. It is also the time that wildlife rehabilitation centres, including the BC SPCA's Wild ARC, are busiest. "We get hundreds of baby birds in the spring," says Wild ARC manager, Sara Dubois. "Often they are brought to us unnecessarily because people are unsure what to do when they find a baby bird."

What to do if you find a baby bird

During springtime you may come across a baby bird. Your first reaction may be to take the bird home and try to feed the helpless creature, but in most cases the young bird doesn't need your help. In fact, you may be doing more harm than good.

Nestling or fledgling?

If the bird has feathers and is able to hop but can't fly, she is called a fledgling. Fledglings should be left alone because this is the stage they are learning to fly. "The parents closely watch their young and continue to feed the youngsters," says Sara. "You should leave fledglings where they are and move out of the area." If you are concerned, Sara advises you watch the bird for awhile – up to an hour – until you see the parents. If the parents don't come back, contact a wildlife rehabilitation centre for advice. "Be sure you keep pets – especially cats – indoors and away from baby birds," warns Sara.

Gull nestling



A nestling is a featherless, downy, or incompletely feathered bird. If you find one, look up and see if you can find the nest – it may be in a nearby tree, shrub, or on the outside of a building. "Try to place the bird back in the nest if possible," says Sara. If the nest is damaged, fix it using any available natural material. You could line it with a tissue or other soft material such as dry moss. "The young bird should be fine," says Sara. "The parents will return to feed the bird." If they don't return in two hours or if the bird is injured, call your local wildlife rehabilitation centre or SPCA shelter for advice.

Fact or Fiction?

If you touch baby birds the parents will reject them and refuse to feed them?

Fiction: Most birds have a poor sense of smell and putting a baby nestling back in its nest will make the parents very pleased!



Birds will defend their nests.

Fact: You will know if you are in the territory of a fledgling bird because the parents will swoop down at you or make loud vocalizations to try to get you to leave.



Some birds will pretend they have broken wings to lure predators away from nests.

Fact: One common species of ground-nesting bird, Killdeer, will fake that they have an injury. As a predator gets closer the bird will run farther away from the nest and again pretend to be injured.



It is okay to take an orphaned baby animal home and raise the animal.

Fiction: It is against the law to keep a wild animal unless you have a permit. If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal, call your local wildlife rehabilitation centre or SPCA shelter for advice.



Goslings

Dogs destroy nests near waterways when they wander off the trails.

Fact: Since many birds nest on the ground, during spring nesting season it is important to keep your dog away from bushes and grassy areas along waterways like creeks, lakes or beaches. You may not even know it is occurring, but your dog may step on eggs as he plays in the bushes or chase young ducklings or goslings.



FRIENDS WITH FEATHERS



PHOTO: STEVE BANKS

Helping birds in your backyard

COLLIN FRANKS



DEVON YU



DAN HILLERT



Like us, birds need three basic things to survive: food, water and shelter. Here's how you can help provide all three – right in your backyard!



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When you're planting greens for your small animals (see the previous page), why not grow something for the birds too? You can attract birds with **native plants** like these that have seeds, berries or nectar for them to eat:

- ✿ mock orange (seeds)
- ✿ large-leaved lupine (seeds and nectar)
- ✿ red-flowering currant (berries and nectar)
- ✿ orange honeysuckle (berries and nectar)
- ✿ red columbine (seeds and nectar)



Gardens with a variety of plants also attract insects – and the birds who munch on them (**mmmmmm, bugs!**). **Bonus:** your garden can provide shelter too!

WATER, WATER, ANYWHERE?

With a **bird bath**, you're bound to get all sorts of visitors. The best baths are those that mimic shallow puddles (which are basically nature's bird baths).

Want to up your bird bath game? Add a **water dripper!** Birds will be attracted to the sound and movement of the water. All you'll need is a plastic milk jug. Poke a

tiny hole in the bottom and hang it above your bird bath so that it drips slowly down into the bath throughout the day. Be sure to unscrew the lid a little. Releasing some air this way will keep the jug from collapsing in on itself. Refill the dripper every day or two.



SHELTER SHORTCUT

Spring is baby bird season! Everywhere you look, birds are hard at work gathering materials to build a nest. Why not make their lives a little easier with a "nest helper"?

A simple **nest helper** can be made from stuffing a kitchen whisk with an assortment of nesting materials. While you're out on a nature walk, try collecting:

- ✿ mosses ✿ dead twigs ✿ bark strips
- ✿ plant fluff (like the white down from cottonwoods)
- ✿ pine needles ✿ dead leaves ✿ dry grass

At home, you can also gather:

- ✿ fabric, yarn or twine made of natural fibers such as raw cotton, hemp, sisal or wool (short strips only so the birds don't get tangled)
- ✿ dog hair (thanks, Fido!)
- ✿ straw

Once the whisk is filled, hang it from a tree or mount it on a fence. Keep it filled through summer too.

SUMMER BIRDING



Chickadee

TAKE THE "30 BIRD" CHALLENGE!

Many of us might find it difficult to name just 10 different birds. Yet in B.C., there are more than 500 species of birds! Your challenge is to spot and identify 30 species (or more!). It may take a few walks to get to 30. Remember, you'll see different birds in forests than you'll see along the shoreline. Marshes and open fields have their own unique birds. Plan your walks in these different areas but start with your own backyard!



Killdeer

Did you know that chickadees often eat **umop əpɪsdn**? Or that killdeer fake having **brōkən** wings to **lure** you away from their nests? Or that kestrels are the only bird of prey who can **hover** like a helicopter?

You can find these birds in and around our cities. Summer is the perfect time to explore the shorelines, parks and forests near your home to see how many birds you can find.

WHY CARE ABOUT BIRDS?

There are lots of reasons to like birds. Besides the fact they can fly and have beautiful plumage, birds play a vital role in the ecosystem. They eat insects like flies and mosquitoes. They help to plant new trees and flowers by scattering seeds. They also help to pollinate plants. Birds are important indicators of a healthy ecosystem.



Kestrel

Tips, timing and tools

- The best time to hear and see birds is early in the morning. By midday, most birds are resting and harder to spot.
- Search for birds near a water source like a creek or a pond.
- Being quiet, patient and having a keen eye are the hallmarks of a good birder.
- Binoculars, a bird book and a camera are the tools of the birding trade.
- A notepad is useful for recording the birds you see and the markings of unknown birds so you can identify them when you get home.
- Go digital! Birding apps can help you identify bird songs and they provide good pictures. Download a free app like Audubon Bird Guide, eBird or Merlin Bird ID.
- Most of all, have fun!



Nuthatch



Rufous hummingbird

FUN



Marsh hawk

What do I eat? Look at my beak!

The shape and size of birds' beaks give clues about what they eat and where they live. Draw a line to connect the picture of the birds to their food.

FINDING FEATHERED FRIENDS

When looking for forest birds, scour the treetops but also look for creepers, nuthatches and sapsuckers feeding along tree trunks.

At an estuary (where a river meets the ocean), look for marsh hawks gliding above. At your feet, look for tiny but chatty marsh wrens darting amongst bulrushes.

By the beach, look for dowitchers and sandpipers running in groups, dipping into the sand to pick up insects. Look high, high up and you might see turkey vultures riding the hot thermal air channels.

Answers: 1. Pileated woodpecker; 2. House finch; 3. Eagle; 4. Flicker; 5. Mallard duck; 6. Wren; 7. Hummingbird



Dowitchers



1.

The **house finch** has a short, strong beak for cracking open seeds. This bird is common at bird feeders.



2.

Wrens mostly eat insects such as caterpillars, beetles and grubs. Their beaks are long and narrow for stabbing. At bird feeders, they look for peanut butter, suet or insects landing on discarded seed.



3.

Pileated woodpeckers have a head like a jackhammer. Their chisel-like beaks are made to peck at tree trunks to dig out ants and other insects living inside.



4.

Hummingbirds have a long, pointed beak. Their forked tongue is twice as long as their beak to help reach deep into flowers. They don't suck up nectar but flick their tongue in and out 12 times a second, lapping up the nectar! See their tongue in action in this amazing one-minute YouTube clip: bit.ly/2XPPk9U.



5.

Eagles use their strong, razor-sharp talons to grip prey such as salmon. Then they use their powerful hooked beaks to tear flesh into chunks.



6.

Watch **flickers** closely to see them pull insects out from holes in trees or ant hills on the ground. Their beaks are long and pointy. They have a long sticky tongue for nabbing insects.



7.

The **mallard duck** dives underwater to feast on aquatic plants, insects and worms. Their bills are wide but strong, so they can pull at the underwater vegetation.