

Hands off that Baby!

Each spring, thousands of people see wildlife babies. Often, the mother is nowhere in sight. Young birds that are just learning to fly may be on the ground. Fawns and baby rabbits may be hidden in tall grass. Even though a wildlife baby is alone, that does not mean that it is an orphan. It also does not mean that the baby's parents are not properly caring for it. They probably are—just not when people are looking. In other words, it's OK for the babies to be alone.

What happens when a well-meaning person "helps" a wildlife baby by picking it up and trying to care for it? It reduces the baby's chance of survival. Wild animals are stressed when taken out of their natural environment. Only someone trained to take care of injured or orphaned wild animals—a wildlife rehabilitator—should take wildlife away from their environment. The **Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)** can help people find a wildlife rehabilitator.

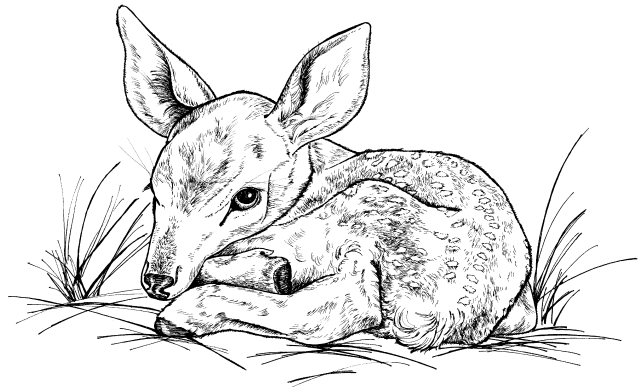
How does someone know when a wildlife baby needs help? What is the best way to help? Here are some tips:

Baby birds: The best thing to do if you find a fallen chick is to put it gently back in its nest. If you cannot reach the nest, leave the chick alone. The parents will return to care for the chick, and can even feed it on the ground.

Many young birds learn how to fly from the ground up. You can tell if their parents are still taking care of them by watching to see if adult birds fly over to feed them. You can also look for bird droppings on the ground. Birds poop after they are fed, so droppings mean that the parents are around and all is well.

Baby squirrels: If you find a baby squirrel that has fallen from a tree, keep watch. If the mother does not rescue it by nightfall, contact CDOW or a wildlife rehabilitator.

Fawns: Deer leave their fawns alone for long periods of time to avoid attracting predators. The mother has a strong scent. Fawns are odorless and safer without mom around. Watch from a distance. If a dead doe is found nearby or if the fawn is wandering and bleating constantly, call CDOW or a wildlife rehabilitator.



Baby rabbits: Just like deer, baby bunnies are often left alone so that the mother's scent does not attract predators. Leave them alone unless they are clearly injured. Then call CDOW or a rehabilitator.

Baby raccoons: Raccoon cubs are rarely left alone. Keep watch. If the baby is alone for more than a few hours, something might have happened to its mother. Call CDOW or a wildlife rehabilitator. Do not try to pick the baby up. Even cute raccoon cubs have sharp teeth and claws, and can carry diseases.

You may see other baby animals that you are concerned about. You can always call the Colorado Division of Wildlife, your local Animal Control, or the Humane Society to ask questions.

