



What to do about....

Injured or Orphaned Wildlife

Wildlife biologists from the Department of Natural Resources are asking the public to help keep Indiana's wildlife wild. "Rescuing an injured or apparently abandoned baby wild animal may do the opposite of what you seek to accomplish and eventually cause the animal more harm than good," said Mark Reiter, director of the DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife.

A video that explains what to do when finding an injured or orphaned wild animal is posted on the DNR YouTube channel at <http://youtu.be/je5O9Wjwuzo> State law defines wildlife as a public resource that belongs to all Indiana citizens, and the DNR is assigned the responsibility of managing wildlife populations on their behalf. The DNR's professional resource management approach is based on the welfare of wild animal populations, the relationship of a wild animal to other animals, and the welfare of the people. State law prohibits possessing or taking a wild animal without a DNR-issued license or permit.

Each year, thousands of animals are born into the wild. As suburban areas spread into their natural habitats, young animals are increasingly born near humans. Most baby wild animals that you may encounter are not orphaned. What may seem like an abandoned animal is normal behavior for most wildlife, so picking it up is usually unnecessary.

"The apparent lack of an adult does not mean a young animal is orphaned," said Linnea Petercheff, operations staff specialist for the Division of Fish & Wildlife. "Adults often leave their young alone, safe in nests or dens, while they forage for food, but rarely do they abandon their young."

Taking a wild animal out of its natural environment, even if it's injured, also can reduce its best chance at survival as it becomes accustomed to relying on humans for food or shelter. Such animals also pose safety and health risks for humans. They may look helpless, cute and cuddly, but they can bite or scratch people who attempt to handle them. Wildlife also can carry infectious diseases and parasites that can be transmitted to humans or domestic animals.



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But there is a proper – and legal – way to care for a wild animal that is truly in need. The DNR issues wild animal rehabilitation permits to qualified individuals. Licensed wildlife rehabilitators are trained in the proper care and handling of wild animals to prevent the animal from being imprinted on humans and to make sure the animal has the best chance of survival when released back into the wild where it belongs. Requirements for obtaining a wild animal rehabilitation permit can be found on the DNR website at www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/5492.htm. If you find a wild animal that is truly abandoned, sick or injured, don't make it your pet. Instead, do one of the following:

- ◇ Leave it where it is. Fawns, baby rabbits, and other young wild animals are left alone at times while the mother is obtaining food. Rabbits, for example, only visit their nest twice a day to help deter predators.
- ◇ If you find a baby bird, squirrel, or other animal that has fallen out of a nest, carefully put it back in the nest. Human scent will not deter the mother.
- ◇ Call a licensed wild animal rehabilitator; a current list can be found under the wildlife rehabilitator link at www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/5492.htm
- ◇ ·Call the DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife in Indianapolis, (317) 232-4080.
- ◇ ·Call the DNR Law Enforcement central dispatch at (812) 837-9536.
- ◇ ·Call a licensed veterinarian for immediate assistance with a sick or severely injured wild animal