

## Nature Notes: Baby Animals and Other Wanderers

In the last few weeks, we have had many calls about critters doing "weird" things. First, there was the painted bunting that kept crashing headfirst into the same office window, knocking himself loopy. Then there was the box turtle in the parking lot, with babies under the bushes. Finally, there were two different snapping turtles, two days in a row, that fell into the dry Blue Hole. Soon, when baby birds start learning to fly, we'll undoubtedly hear about fallen youngsters that need to be "saved".



Some of you may be experiencing a similar uptick in wildlife activity, and your animal friends may be worrying you. What's a nature lover to do? When should we help, and when should we stay out of a critter's business?

In most cases, the best thing to do is NOTHING. Think about it: whatever life form or species in question, it has perpetuated for a long time without human intervention-which means individuals have instinctive behaviors that will get them through most situations they encounter. There may be times when a little help is warranted, but **we often do more harm than good by intervening.**

Some would advocate letting nature take its course, but if you are soft-hearted, here are a few tips for common situations.

Baby Birds Fallen from the Nest: Unless there are predators nearby, or the chick is clearly too young to fly, don't do anything! Mom and dad will handle it. If there are eager kitties around, you might find the fledgling a higher spot to perch and wait for his parents. If the fallen bird is a very young chick, try to put it back in the nest. Yes, it's

OKAY to touch the bird with your bare hands: mom and dad won't care.

#### Birds Battling Your Windows:

Sometimes this is an accident, but if it happens repeatedly (as with our bunting), you may have a male trying to establish territory by fighting his own reflection.

*For the bird:* like a fledgling, the best thing to do is to protect the bird from predators if necessary, and leave it alone!

Most birds recover from even severe smash-ups, and the added stress of being placed in a box and brought in your house is a hindrance. Move birdie out of the heat if necessary, and wait a few hours.

*For your window:* pull the curtains or tape up a piece of paper, picture, anything to break the reflection for a day or two.

#### Fawns and Other Cute Mammals:

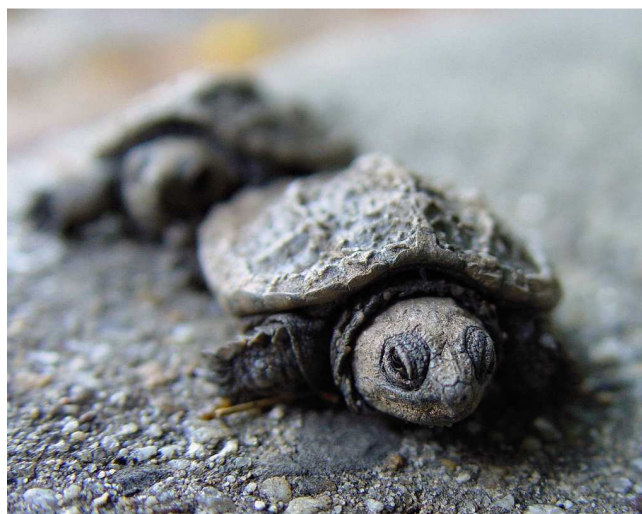
Mammal mamas are very careful about their babies—they don't wander off and forget them! So, if you see a baby that looks abandoned, rest assured that he is not. For example, deer leave their fawns hidden while they forage: this protects the babies from predators. A fawn will stay bedded down unless something scary gets really, really close. If that happens, the fawn runs off and then hides again.

And yes, mother will find him in the new hiding spot. So, don't kidnap that fawn!

Baby Snakes, Turtles, and Frogs: Unlike birds and mammals, most reptiles and amphibians do not care for their offspring after birth. Again, don't worry! These tiny critters are well-adapted to hit the ground running, slithering, or hopping. It is true that not all the babies may make it: that is why these animals

produce very large numbers of young. If you interfere, hoping to save some babies, you may do more harm than good.

Adult Critters in Odd Places: As they search for mates, for places to have and raise their offspring, or maybe just for water, animals can end up in some strange places. The general rule for adults is, leave well enough alone—unless it is clear the animal is trapped. For example, the two snapping turtles in the Blue Hole were in a hole six feet below the creek bed, with no way to climb out. Both probably wandered in thinking they had found a great hiding spot (with a floor). These animals needed saving!



## Events and Volunteering

**POSTPONED--May 21. Third Thursday Workday.** Stay Tuned for Updates

Stay Tuned for Volunteer Opportunities in June!

**We are working on hosting more  
WEEKEND volunteer events...**

**We need a regular volunteer interested  
in being a VOLUNTEER LEADER for  
some of these events. *Is that you?*  
Call us at 828-2224!**

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