

# Don't 'rescue' baby birds

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Helping hands: Mia Cirotto is a wildlife rehabilitator with the Wildlife Rescue Association.

**Photograph by:** Larry Wright, BURNABY NOW

Do you see a baby bird that looks like it's struggling to survive?

Don't pick it up just yet.

"It's not always easy to tell the difference between a bird learning to fly and a bird struggling for survival," says Crystal Simmons, the Wildlife Rescue Association's care centre liaison.

The group has issued a rescue checklist to help people determine whether they should intervene with birds.

- Nestling or fledgling?: A nestling is a very young bird that is either naked or partially feathered. It is unable to stand or stay warm and is extremely vulnerable outside the nest. If the bird has no apparent injuries, you can see the nest and it is easily accessible, pick the bird up gently and return it to the nest. If you can find no sign of the nest or parents, please call Wildlife Rescue.

If the bird is fully feathered, it is a fledgling and you should ...

- Watch and wait: If you can see the parents nearby, there is no need to intervene. But be patient. Adult birds often watch their offspring from a distance, or return a few times a day to feed them, so try and keep an eye on the situation throughout the day.

- When to take action: If the bird is limping or dragging a wing, or if you see blood, open wounds or any other obvious injury, call the Wildlife Rescue helpline at 604-526-7275.

The association also asks people who have cats to keep them indoors. If you can't keep your cat indoors, consider investing in a CatBib ([www.catgoods.com](http://www.catgoods.com)), which prevents cats from hunting birds.

Information on dealing with baby birds is also at [www.wildliferescue.ca](http://www.wildliferescue.ca).

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