



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Family break-up bad for birds

As birds across Metro Vancouver get on with the business of raising their young, the Wildlife Rescue Association of BC has produced a rescue checklist to reduce the number of birds that are separated from their families due to unnecessary human intervention.

As well as receiving birds that are sick, injured or genuinely orphaned, the charitable organization also sees lots of healthy young birds that have been picked up by concerned members of the public.

When they leave the nest, most bird species spend a number of days on the ground learning to fly. They hop, flap and go through the motions of flight while grounded. To the untrained eye this normal behaviour may be mistaken for signs of distress. Before the bird has a chance to take flight, someone swoops to the rescue and separates the bird from its parents.

“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 WRA’s Care Centre Liaison. “We hope our checklist will give more people the confidence to make the right call.”

WRA Rescue Checklist

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 the nest is destroyed but the parents are nearby, you can try and re-build it or substitute it with a small box. (Don’t worry about handling the bird, the parents are not bothered by human scent and will not reject the nestling.) If you can find no sign of the nest or parents, please call the WRA.

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. The bigger the bird, the longer it takes to learn to fly, and in some species the process can take up to ten days.

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 WRA helpline immediately on 604.526.7275.

We also ask people who have cats to keep them indoors. If you can't keep your cat indoors, consider investing in a CatBib (<http://wildliferescue.ca/merch.shtml>), which prevents cats from hunting birds.

"The WRA relies on members of the public to bring injured wildlife to our facility and we encourage them to continue doing so. But, we don't want to disturb healthy birds whose best chance of survival is under the care of their parents" adds Crystal.

Members of the public can call the WRA hotline on 604.526.7275 for further advice and information on local wildlife issues. Information on dealing with baby birds is also available on our website at www.wildliferescue.ca.

Photographs of nestlings and fledglings are available on request.

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WRA Wildlife Rescue Association of BC is a charitable society that has been providing leadership in wildlife rehabilitation and promoting the welfare of wild animals in the urban environment since 1979. Each year, WRA cares for around 3,000 injured, orphaned, and pollution-damaged wild animals, and WRA provides public education and outreach through its wildlife hotline, website, Earth Fest community festival, summer day camps, and over 100 presentations and displays throughout the Lower Mainland. www.wildliferescue.ca