

With the warmer weather of Spring comes Duckling Season! Each year, Wildlife Rescue takes in hundreds of baby ducklings. Here's what you can do to help them grow up safely.

Baby ducks leave the nest almost immediately after hatching, and will follow their mom closely. They already know how to eat on their own, but will need mom's help to lead them to good foraging areas, and still need their families for warmth and protection. Baby ducks can go in water briefly, but because their feathers are not yet waterproof, they can quickly become hypothermic (chilled) if they remain in the water more than a few minutes. If you find a baby duck alone, it is almost certainly separated from its family.

- **If the baby is separated from the mother and you know where she is, place the baby close to the family so mom can hear the baby, then watch from a distance to ensure they are reunited.**
- **If the baby re-joins the family, leave the area, the baby is fine.**
- **If the baby is rejected, or if the mother cannot be found, call Wildlife Rescue's Support Centre at (604) 526-7275 or email wildlife@wildliferescue.ca**

I have found a bunch of eggs on the ground, what should I do?

Mallards typically lay up to 12-13 eggs in a clutch, and one egg a day, so this will take up to 12-13 days. She will not start incubating her eggs (laying on them) until all eggs are laid, so finding a nest with only three or four eggs and no mother duck does not mean that the nest is abandoned. Mallard eggs are unmarked and creamy in colour to grayish or greenish buff.

If something happens to an unfinished clutch of eggs, Mallard hens will make another attempt until they raise a successful brood. Once all eggs are laid, she will rarely leave the nest apart from short breaks to feed and stretch her legs. About 28 days later the eggs hatch together. This takes about 24 hours.

The ducklings have just hatched! How long will they stay there?

Once hatched, the ducklings will stay in the nest for at least 10 hours while they dry and get used to using their legs. Then, usually in the early morning, the female leads them to water. Bad weather may delay this, but the sooner the ducklings get to water to feed, the better their chances of survival. They cannot survive without their mother, and take 50-60 days before they fledge and become independent.

I have found ducklings alone! What do I do?

The mother duck may have been scared away and has not returned. Keep the babies protected and wait from a nearby location. Do your best to conceal yourself so that you don't scare mama away if she returns. She will usually return within a half-hour if the area has become quiet again and the threat is gone. She is very protective of her babies and will not go far or stay away for very long. If the mother does not return to her babies within 1-hour, the ducklings should be rescued and brought to Wildlife Rescue. If assistance is required please reach out to our Helpline. If they are not in a contained area during capture, ducklings will sometimes scatter into a dangerous location.

How can I prevent ducks from entering my pool?

Pool covers are an effective control for uninvited pool guests. They are also safer for other wildlife (and young mammals that may fall into it and not be able to get themselves out). Other measures to discourage ducks from pools include; floating alligators or beach balls (they must be moving continuously); sensor sprinklers or sprayers strategically placed; monofilament barriers (installed by professionals); music, radio or strobe lights activated by sensors. Some professional companies specialize in exclusion devices for wildlife. If people don't have a pool cover [we do recommend devices like the FrogLog®](#) to make it easier for wildlife to self-rescue.



Babies are in my pool and cannot get out. What do I do?

Hypothermia will result if babies are in a pool for more than a few minutes. Mother will stay in the pool with them (to protect them) if they cannot get out and it may appear as if she is voluntarily allowing them to swim. She will exit the pool as soon as the babies are given a means to get out of the water. Be sure to screen skimmer or filter openings that may trap helpless ducklings with suction.

- **Build a ramp – Make a ramp for the babies climb out on. This can be a flutterboard or outdoor cushion secured to the side of the pool. If you use a board or piece of wood, secure an empty pop bottle to the bottom of one end to make sure it floats. Back off and give the ducklings some time. It may take them a while to figure out how the ramp works.**
- **Only as a last resort – Pool skimmers or nets should only be used as a last resort – ducklings will dive to avoid them, and as they get more stressed and tired, they can drown. It's often better to give them the means to leave on their own time.**

Can I relocate a family of ducks from my yard?

Mallard ducks are federally protected, so moving a nest with eggs is illegal without a permit. It is unlawful for any person to capture, possess or relocate ducks (and other migratory birds) except by permit. We encourage you to let the ducks finish nesting. After the ducklings hatch and the family moves on, you can put up deterrents to prevent them from nesting there again.

Ducks are nesting on my roof or elevated patio, what should I do?

Ducklings can safely jump to the ground from buildings on to concrete that are less than 2 storeys high and if there is no barrier/edge higher than 12cm. If a family of ducks have nested on a building that is taller than 2 storeys and/or there is a barrier higher than 12 cm it is best to contact Wildlife Rescue's helpline, (604) 526-7275. Wildlife Rescue has trained volunteers that can help with these rescues. Mother Mallards may not return to their ducklings if stressed so it is important to contact Wildlife Rescue first before attempting capture.

Can I feed the ducks?

It's normal for a female mallard not to eat much for the entire incubation period – she fattens up beforehand to prepare. Leaving food out for the duck will only attract predators like rats, raccoons and coyotes, putting the nest in danger. Once the ducklings have hatched, feeding them unnatural food like bread can cause problems with their growing bones and feathers.

There is a family of ducks crossing the road! How can I help?

Always consider human safety first – never put yourself or other people in danger to help a family of ducks cross a road. You can help by waving at drivers or flashing your lights to alert them to the birds. Ask passersby with pets or children to keep back. Keep a safe distance, and try to gently steer the birds in the direction of the closest pond, stream, river, or lake. It may seem like a good idea in these situations to try to catch the family and move them to a safe spot, but this risks scaring off the mother and orphaning the babies.

Remember that crossing roads is a fact of life for urban wild animals, and one of many skills babies need to learn from their parents.

There is a family of ducks on the highway! How can I help?

Some rescues are best left to the experts, and duck families on multi-lane highways with barriers and heavy traffic may need help. Contact Wildlife Rescue as soon as possible. We will reach out to the experts to manage traffic so that our Rescue Team can safely help. Non-emergency police are also helpful, as ducks crossing highways can result in accidents if people rapidly brake to avoid them.



Questions?
Contact: 604-526-7275
wildlife@wildliferescue.ca