

Rescuing animals could kill them

You're walking along the edge of a meadow and you find a nest of baby birds recently blown from a tree. Or your dog digs up a nest of tiny rabbits. What do you do?

Your first impulse is to pick up the little creatures and take them home. But this may be exactly the worst action to take.

"Unless you know absolutely that the parents of the little animals are dead, or that the young have been abandoned, it's best to leave them where you find them," says Glenn Dudderar, Extension wildlife specialist at Michigan State University. "A young animal's chances of survival are much greater if you leave it there than if you take it home and try to raise it yourself."

Making wild animals captive also violates state and possibly federal laws, depending on the species. In addition to all the work that raising the animal entails, there's the red tape of getting a permit to keep it.

"If YOU do decide to take in a young animal, you'd better have a veterinarian," Dudderar emphasizes. "The fact that you didn't see the parents around isn't

enough. They might have been out getting food or hiding somewhere and waiting for you to leave."

SO WHAT SHOULD YOU do? In the case of baby birds fallen from a nest or a nest blown from a tree, you can do the most good for the little birds by placing them back in the nest, or replacing the nest in the tree. You have to put the nest back almost exactly where it came from, however, or the parents won't be able to recognize it as their nest.

"It's a common myth that a mother bird will reject a baby bird that's been handled by a human," Dudderar says. "But birds have a poorly developed sense of smell. Like people, they depend mostly on their vision. So, if you put the nest or the baby back where it was originally, they'll find it and resume caring for it."

Baby mammals are another story, he points out. If you put a baby rabbit back in a nest, the mother may ignore the scent, or may abandon the whole nest or may kill all the young. A deer wouldn't try to kill her fawn, but she might abandon it. Or, she might just kick it until all traces of human scent were removed.

Sometimes you definitely know that a young bird or animal has been orphaned or abandoned. Before you take on the job of raising it, you'd better be sure you're ready for all the work it will require.

"Any animal or bird that's too small to have fur or feathers yet has to be kept warm, approximately body temperature, to avoid chilling," Dudderar says. "It also needs a humid environment so that it doesn't get dehydrated. The proper food isn't always easy to provide, either."

BIRDS THAT are fed by their parents can usually get by on canned dog food rolled into little balls and fed every three or four hours. They also need a daily dose of liquid vitamins. Chicken-like birds—pheasants, quail, etc.—can be fed poultry starter. Birds like doves, which poke their bills into their parents' throats to feed, can be raised on a slurry of pablum and milk.

presented in the rubber bulb of an eyedropper.

Hawks, owls and other predatory birds must be fed raw meat with fur or feathers still attached. They need this material to digest their food, Dudderar explains. One way to provide it is to buy dead mice or chicks and chop them up into little pieces for hand feeding.

Baby mammals must be fed prepared infant's formula or one of the powdered milk substitutes for domestic animals. Deer, for instance, do well on calves' formula.

If you succeed in raising the animal, in spite of the odds against it, you have to teach it to fend for itself in the wild.

"AN ANIMAL raised in captivity has to be taught to find its own food," Dudderar says. "A raccoon, for instance, you have to take it to a stream or river, wade along the shallow edge and show it how to turn over rocks to find food."



Freedom's fireworks

Fireworks reminiscent of "the rockets' red glare" will be seen over the Detroit River during the Detroit-Windsor International Freedom Festival June 30 through July 4. This year's display will begin at dusk on June 30. Several tons of starbursts will be shot into the night sky from barges in the river. In case of bad weather, the fireworks will be rescheduled for July 1.

Devil drink is Mills' target

Former U.S. Rep. and recovering alcoholic Wilbur Mills will be keynote speaker for the 25th anniversary of Brighton Hospital on Aug. 5.

The hospital is one of the country's first and leading facilities for the exclusive treatment of alcoholism.

Alcoholism contributed to Mills' downfall from one of the most powerful positions in Congress. In January

1978, Washington D.C. police found Mills, then chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, in the Potomac River Tidal Basin, after he apparently had too much to drink.

That incident and Mills' relationship with a Boston burlesque dancer, Fanne Fox, led the Arkansas Democrat to admit he was an alcoholic. A year later, he resigned from the House.

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