



Birds that nest in open nests

Re-nesting is suitable for most species of common native birds that raise their young in an open nest including magpies, crows, noisy miners, magpie larks and butcherbirds.

What you will need:

- A plastic bucket (about 30-35cm deep) with wire or plastic handle
- A handful of leaves and grass
- A stick/branch (about 60cm long)

If you don't have a plastic bucket, you can use an ice-cream container (suitable for small birds), a hanging plant basket or sturdy cane basket.

4 easy steps to making a new home:

1. Drill or punch several holes in the bottom of the bucket or ice-cream container to provide drainage in case of rain.
2. Place a layer of soft leaves or grass in the bottom. Place the stick in the bucket at an angle by securing it into one of the drainage holes. This will allow the parents and baby bird to get in and out easily.
3. Place the baby in its new home. Hang the bucket at head height in a leafy tree, or tall bush, away from direct sunlight and predators and as close as possible to where you found the baby. The parents will not mind if it is in a different tree.
4. Watch from a distance to make sure the parents return to feed the baby. If the new home is disturbed, this may take several hours. If the parents do not return by dark, the baby will need to come into care.

How do I know if the bird needs to come into care?

There are some instances where we do need to intervene and bring the bird into care for assessment, treatment and possibly hand-rearing. Baby birds that show the following signs should come into care:

- Naked or near-naked altricial hatchlings that cannot be returned to the original nest (these are not suitable to be re-nested).
- If the bird has any injuries or has been in the mouth of a dog or cat.
- If the bird is cold and/or lethargic.
- If you notice the parent(s) dead nearby.
- When efforts to re-unite the baby with its parents have failed.

In these instances, gently place the bird into a ventilated small box with a soft towel on the bottom and place into a warm, dark and quiet location. Do not provide any food or water as our native birds have very specialised diets. Contact your local wildlife care group immediately for further advice.

Can I care for wild baby birds?

Under the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992*, it is illegal to take protected wildlife from the wild. Our native birds have very specialised dietary and social needs. They require artificial heating (such as incubators and brooders) and some require feeding every 30-60 minutes.

Registered wildlife rehabilitators are trained in all facets of rehabilitation and hand-raising of native wild birds and have the support and experience of specialised wildlife hospitals to assist them. Contact your local wildlife care group or wildlife hospital if you are interested in becoming a trained and licensed bird carer.

wildcare caring for our wildlife

Our emergency hotline is available 24 hours,
7 days a week including ALL public holidays.

24 Hour Emergency Hotline

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Have you found a baby bird?

Spring and summer are always busy months for wildlife rescuers, rehabilitators, veterinary clinics and wildlife hospitals. During these months, baby birds begin to fledge and leave the safety of their nest. While some individuals may become sick or injured and need our help, most do not but are rescued by well-meaning members of the public.

Healthy baby birds have a much better chance of survival when left in their natural environment with their parents.

Can I reunite a baby bird with its parents?

YES! It is extremely important to make every attempt to reunite or 're-nest' a healthy, uninjured baby bird with its parents. After all, there is no substitute for the care of mum and dad. In most circumstances, with a little bit of patience and a few household items, we can successfully reunite the parents with their baby.

Here's what we need to do:

Firstly, we need to correctly identify the bird.

Not all baby birds are raised in a nest; some are ready to take on the world the day they are born (precocial) and some aren't (altricial).



Altricial

Precocial

Precocial birds are born covered in down with their eyes open and can feed themselves and walk soon after hatching. Precocial birds such as ducks, masked lapwings (plovers), swamphens and moorhens usually nest on the ground and will stay under the watchful protection of their parents until they are independent. Some precocial chicks, such as the brush-turkey, are independent from the time of hatching and receive no parental guidance at all.

Helping precocial chicks

A precocial baby does not need to be placed in a nest. If it appears to be in danger and the parents are still around, place it under a dense bush or shrub in a nearby location and observe to ensure the parents rejoin it. Parent birds have a strong parental bond with their babies and will return to protect the young as soon as they feel it is safe to do so. Do not offer the baby any food or water; it is best to leave feeding to the parents.



Precocial

Altricial

Altricial birds are born completely or nearly naked with their eyes closed and are cared for by their parents until they are mature enough to leave the nest. These include the majority of birds such as honeyeaters, insectivores, parrots, pigeons, doves, carnivores and most raptors. These birds usually nest in trees or off the ground.

Helping altricial chicks

There are two general stages of altricial baby birds; 'featherless' or 'fledgling'.

Featherless baby birds have no feathers to keep them warm. If the parents do not return soon, they will need to be taken into care. They need to be kept warm. Ensure that you provide gentle heat, such as placing them on a hot water bottle which is well wrapped in a towel, while transporting them to a wildlife hospital or wildlife rehabilitator.

Fledgling baby birds have a significant number of adult-looking feathers. They have just left the nest and are learning to fly under the watchful eye of mum and dad who will teach them the survival skills that they will need to know as a bird; how to fly, what food to eat, how to find food and how to avoid predators. Please do not 'rescue' them unless they are in immediate danger. In this case, carefully place them on a branch in a nearby bush or shrub for safety. Mum and dad will stay close to keep a watchful eye on them.

If they appear to be sick or injured, they will need to be rescued and receive appropriate care.

How do I re-nest or reunite baby altricial chicks with their parents?

Most healthy, uninjured altricial baby birds with considerable down or feathers whose parents are nearby, are suitable to be re-nested and should be placed in a makeshift nest. The parents will continue to care for their baby in the new nest. Contrary to popular belief, they will not reject a baby because it has been handled by a human.

Birds that nest in tree hollows or closed nests

Native birds that raise their young in tree hollows or closed nests (such as termite mounds), are difficult to re-nest. Species such as parrots, lorikeets, kookaburras and kingfishers have more specialised nesting requirements and these should be referred to an experienced bird rehabilitator for advice, as they may need to come into care.