

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Orphaned birds

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

The idea of picking up a young bird that seems to be orphaned or in trouble may seem advisable but can often do more harm than good.

If you come across a bird, the first thing to do is to determine if the bird really needs help. In most cases, a baby bird may be a fledgling, or one that has just left the nest and is learning to fly, and its parent may be close by watching. Fledglings are typically adorable, fluffy, and have a short tail. There is usually no need to 'rescue' a fledgling bird, it's merely learning from his parents how to survive and doesn't need human help. If you're concerned, you can watch the bird for a while to determine if the bird is truly orphaned or in danger.

If there is danger nearby, like a free roaming cat, you can remove the cat from the area and see if you can put it indoors. If you can see that the bird's parents are dead and it's truly orphaned or visibly injured, call a wildlife rehabilitator. Rehabilitators have the knowledge, training and permits that enable them to legally and properly care for a bird - in most cases it's not legal for an individual to possess a wild bird. A rehabilitator will be able to instruct you about what to do to care for the bird until it can be placed in their care.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.