



Birds and Cats

North America's 100 million domestic cats kill an estimated **one billion wild birds** each year. World-wide predation by cats may contribute to more bird species extinctions than any other cause except habitat loss.

Domestic cats are not "natural" predators of wild birds, and often kill them even when well-fed. It is impossible to tell if a free-ranging cat is killing birds (unless you follow it around the neighbourhood), because it may not bring them home.

If you wish to protect the birds in your yard, follow these guidelines, and encourage your cat-owning neighbours to do the same:

- Keep your cat indoors, or in a safe outdoor enclosure. Indoor cats usually live longer, healthier and safer lives than cats which are allowed to wander.
- Do not feed stray cats. This can cause cat colonies to form, which impact local wildlife populations and can serve as sources of disease, which can be transmitted to other cats, wildlife and people.
- Never abandon cats outside. This is cruel and inhumane to both the cats and local wildlife. Take an unwanted cat to an SPCA or humane society, so that it may be adopted.
- Spay or neuter your cat before it has a chance to produce offspring.

Baby Birds in your Yard

Young birds often leave their nests before they can fly, and before they are capable of looking after themselves. You may find them anywhere in your yard.

Parents of baby birds will still look after them and feed them, wherever they are. If the bird is very young, and its nest is easily and safely accessible, you can return the bird to it. *It is a myth that a bird will reject its young if they are touched by humans; birds have a very poor sense of smell.* Do not be surprised if the bird leaves the nest again within a short time.

Parental care is by far the best care that young birds can receive. A fledgling's parents know instinctively what kind of food it needs, how much and how often it needs to be fed. Try to resist the temptation to "rescue" young birds; it is not necessary unless you know that both parents have been killed.

Attempting to properly care for a young bird is a large responsibility. The bird must first be identified in order to know what to feed it. It must be fed frequently for several days (i.e.: every half hour all day and evening). It must be kept clean and constantly warm, in a properly sized container, supported in the proper position. It is a serious commitment for a child (who is usually the person who finds the bird and wants to keep it), and if the bird's chances of survival are not good, that can be upsetting.

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