

# Taking care of injured, unwanted wildlife should be immediate

By Cheryl Millham

I am so sad because a baby Steller's Jay was never brought in for care. I have had to learn just to let things go, but it still hurts.

As the story goes, I got a call last Saturday from a young lady at Lake Tahoe Community College saying some Jays built a nest on a piece of equipment and one egg hatched on Friday. Since she called me on Saturday, I told her to let the baby Jay stay as long as it could with its mom. I explained it only takes 23 days before the baby will fledge and leave the nest and would they be able to wait.



She told me the piece of equipment had to be used this week. I told her to bring in the nest – with the baby to the wildlife center – just before they would use the equipment.

We would then complete the “raising” of the baby. Well, here it is, a week later, and no baby. I do not know if they just threw out the nest with the baby (yes, it has been done before), or if someone took it home to raise, which is illegal in most states (including California).

Let me tell you why this is a bad idea.

It takes 14 days for an egg to hatch and 23 to 25 days for the baby bird to leave the nest. This is called fledging. The young bird goes to the ground to hop around and learn to fly. The parents feed it and encourage it to fly. Some kids are

quick learners and some take a few days.

If the baby bird does not get the proper diet – due to the fact they develop so fast in 23–25 days – they cannot develop strong bones and feathers. Baby birds get fed every 15 minutes for 14 hours, plus have to be kept warm.

If you know you are going to do work on your house or paint it and can't leave a nest alone for one month, please do not let the birds build a nest at your house.

Brewers Blackbirds might seem cute, building their nest and sitting on eggs, but once the eggs hatch and they are caring for their babies, they become very protective and will dive bomb anyone who gets close to the nest. Sometimes, even hitting people on the head.

One of our senior volunteers called this week and said her dog alerted her that something was in the chimney. So, she opened the flu and saw an adult raccoon looking down at her. So, she called LTWC for some direction.

She thought the raccoon was stuck. I assured her that raccoons climb up and down inside chimneys just like they do trees. They have their babies inside a chimney because to them it is a safe place.

Warning – do not start a fire. Doing this can kill her and if she has already had her babies, they will suffocate as well.

One way to get the raccoons to leave is to use regular scented Pine Sol. Soak the Pine Sol on some rags and stuff them up in the chimney (using a stick, pole, branch, etc.) close to where the raccoon is trying to nest. The fumes will definitely cause her to re-think where she should make her nest. Only use "regular" Pine Sol.



These newly hatched birds are called nestlings. They have just hatched and have no feathers. They rely on mom entirely for warmth, food and safety. Photo/LTWC

I got a call back about 30 minutes later by our volunteer, saying that within 5 minutes the mom raccoon made a bee line out of the chimney. She went to get her camera to take a picture of mom coming out of the chimney, but she had already left.

Please feel free to call Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care (530.577.2273) to receive some directions if you have wildlife trying to move in with you and your family. We have lots of suggestions.

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