

Warning: Leave young wildlife alone

With late spring and early summer being the peak time for wildlife to bear their young, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing this reminder: If you find a seemingly abandoned young wild animal, leave it alone.

Even though it may be hard to resist picking up a young wild animal that appears to be abandoned, intervention may cause more harm than good. Young animals that are removed from their natural environment typically do not survive. Those that do may not develop wilderness survival skills, making them unsuitable for release back into their natural habitat.

“It is a common mistake to believe a young animal has been abandoned when it is found alone, even if the mother has not been observed in the area for a long period of time,” Nicole Carion, CDFW’s statewide wildlife rehabilitation coordinator, said in a statement “Chances are the mother is off seeking food, or she could be nearby, waiting for you to leave.”

This behavior is common across many species. For example, adult female deer often stash their fawns in tall grass or brush for many hours while they are out foraging for food. A female mountain lion may spend as much as 50 percent of her time away from her kittens.

If a young animal is in distress, or you are unsure, contact a wildlife rehabilitation facility.

It is important to note that wild animals – even young ones – can cause serious injury with their sharp claws, hooves and teeth, especially when injured and scared. They may also carry ticks, fleas and lice, and can transmit diseases to humans, including rabies and tularemia.