

HELP! I FOUND A BABY DOVE ON THE GROUND!

Doves are one of the easiest birds to re-nest when a baby has fallen. Doves are devoted parents and will often try to sit on and care for misplaced kids on the ground. Of course, the ground is not a suitable place to raise a baby dove. First, the baby will surely get eaten by predators, including ants, if it stays there. Also, the parent birds (for their own safety) return to a tree as soon as it starts to get dark, so the baby would be left unprotected.



If you find a baby dove or two on the ground especially after a windstorm, check around before taking them to a rehabber.

Is the bird(s) warm, alert, and uninjured? Hold the bird in the palm of your hand. If it feels cool or cold, get it on a heat source such as a heating pad (low setting) or fill a plastic water bottle, orange juice container, milk jug, etc. with hot water from the faucet. Put the cap back on and place it next to the bird in covered containment. If the bird perks up after 15 minutes or so and has no other problems, he's ready to be re-nested.



If the bird is injured and especially if the bird has been handled by a cat, it does need to go to a rehabber as soon as possible. The bacteria in a cat's mouth and claws can be fatal to a bird. Even if the cat has not punctured the bird, the saliva can get into the bird's mouth or eyes and do damage. To a bird, cat spit should be viewed as a biological weapon of mass destruction.

If the nest is on the ground and can be re-used, find a nearby tree (if the original nesting spot is too high) and secure the nest there. Make sure the nest is protected from the sun. If you cannot get the old nest, a makeshift nest can be made. Use a small, nest size basket (no laundry baskets!) lined with straw, dried grass, or the remains of the old nest inside. Natural fiber and natural color is best. Too large of a basket and/or bright colors can scare off the parents. Make sure the basket you make has good drainage in case it rains.

If you see adult doves in the area and they appear to be hanging around, they might be the parents. Doves will continue to search for the lost nestling for the next day or two. The babies will make soft, whistling sounds when they are hungry and the parents will be listening for that sound. Keep checking the nest from inside your house to make sure the parents do return.

Fledglings:

From the time they hatch, doves leave the nest at 11 or 12 days old. When they begin to self regulate their body temperature, the parents no longer brood them at night.

If a baby is reluctant to leave the nest after 12 days, the parents will often keep watch nearby but refuse to feed it. Finally, the baby will get hungry enough to leave the nest and flutter down to the ground.

Fledgling doves may be on the ground for several days before they are able to fly back up into a tree. This is a time when they are very vulnerable. They have to hide in bushes or underbrush during the night and are often caught by prowling cats.