

This column features questions from readers submitted via the website. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit **BarnyardsandBackyards.com**. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards & Backyards!*



ask Sam

question

Dear Sam,

Help! Each summer, I find baby birds out of their nest because I have several bird houses scattered throughout my yard and I've also found nests in some of my trees. What should I do? – *Judith*

Dear Judith,

It sure is fun to watch as a bird goes about the business of building a nest, laying eggs, and raising a new generation of birds.

Knowing what to do with a baby bird out of a nest starts with an understanding of the development of a bird because as they grow, they have different requirements and stages. In some cases, leaving a bird out of the nest is perfectly fine, other stages it may not be.

Starting right after they hatch, baby birds are referred to as hatchlings. You'll notice their eyes are

closed, and they have no feathers. After a few days, their eyes will open and you'll notice that they begin to grow feathers. These newly emerging feathers resemble the plastic ends of a shoelace string. At this stage we call them "nestlings." At both of these stages, the baby birds are very dependent on one or both parents. If you can, return the bird back to the nest or bird house.

One of the most entertaining events to witness is when the baby birds "fledge." This is the stage when the birds are learning to fly and preparing for life without the help of their parents. If you find a bird at this stage outside of the nest, don't worry, they are practicing and are oftentimes awkward and ungraceful. They'll keep trying to get back to their nest on their own, and it is all part of this learning stage in life. However, if you think they may be in danger due to pets or other predators, you can simply put them back near their house or nest. You'll notice that the birds at this stage have both wing and tail feathers, and their eyes are open.

If you find an injured bird at any stage, call your local Game and Fish Department office. For more information go to <http://bit.ly/birdquestions>.

Happy birding,
– *Sam*



answer

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