

HOW TO HELP SICK OR INJURED WILD BIRDS

A sick or injured bird has immediate needs that must be attended to in order to save its life.



Two of these needs are HEAT and FLUIDS.

First, place the bird you have found in a container such as a shoebox with a soft towel on the bottom and air holes on the top. Put a heating pad set on *low* under half the container so the bird has access to warmth. **HEAT IS CRUCIAL** to a sick bird that has lost the ability to maintain its own body heat, as displayed by fluffed-up feathers, closed eyes, listlessness, and feeling cool to the touch.

Another way to warm up a cold bird is by wrapping it in a towel that has been heated in the microwave or by placing it on top of a cloth on a sealed plastic bag of hot water. Closely monitor the bird for heat regulation. If it opens its beak to

breathe, it is probably too hot and will need to be moved further from the heat.

Next, you need to hydrate the bird. Warm up a source of quick energy such as Pedialyte, Gatorade, or sugar water (1 part sugar to 5 parts water). If the liquid is too hot to your touch, it is too hot for the bird. If the bird is not able to drink on its own, use your finger or an eye dropper to place drops of the liquid along the side of the bird's beak. The liquid will seep inside and the bird will swallow. Continue to do this until the bird indicates, by turning its head or letting the liquid spill out of its mouth, that it has had enough.

Sick or injured birds are almost always dehydrated and should generally be given fluids every hour for the first few hours. This process will vary depending on the amount that can be taken at one time and the degree of illness.

Stress is a primary concern when treating a sick or injured bird, as a stressed bird can die very quickly. **QUICKLY ASSESS WHAT MIGHT BE WRONG AND DON'T HANDLE THE BIRD ANY LONGER THAN IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.** If there is obvious bleeding, *gently* press on the area with a cloth or tissue until the bleeding stops, usually just a few minutes. Pressure that is too firm will actually prevent clotting.

If the bird at any time begins breathing through an open beak, **IMMEDIATELY** set it down. When handling the bird, be careful not to press on the underside of its

body. The keel bone that runs the length of the bird's underside will press against the heart if pushed too hard. Birds do not have rib cages to protect vital organs.

Always hold birds by gently grasping with your open hand over the top of their shoulders to prevent the wings from flapping, while supporting the feet in your other hand. If the bird has a fractured (drooping) wing or a broken leg, be very careful when handling; these injuries are painful. Quickly look at the head, eyes, beak, wings, legs, feet, and vent (under the tail) for any apparent injury or abnormal appearance. The left and right sides of the bird should exactly match up. If something looks a little different on one side, like an eye that is slightly swollen compared to the other eye, this means something is wrong. The vent hole should be clean and clear. Dried poop on feathers around the vent is usually indicative of a sick bird.

After your assessment and initial treatment, keep the bird in a quiet, dark, warm place until you can get further help. Most birds need medications or specific procedures to treat the illness or injury. To locate an avian vet or an experienced wild bird rehabilitator, contact:

Wild Bird Rehab Haven
808-447-WBRH (9274)

www.wildbirdrehabhaven.org

Questions and Answers:

Q: The bird I placed in a box to rest flew away when I checked on him an hour later.

A: Sometimes a bird that has been stunned by some sort of impact will be capable of flying away after a short rest period.

Q: My cat had a bird in its mouth, but after examining the bird I saw no evidence of injury. What should I do?

A: Any time a bird has been exposed to the saliva or claws of a cat, the bird needs antibiotics. Without medication, the bird may appear fine for several days afterward but then suddenly die from an infection.

Q: If I touch a wild bird, can I get parasites from that bird?

A: Any parasite that MAY be on a bird does not want to live on you. A bird's body temperature is higher than yours. You can simply wash off any thing that may briefly crawl on you. Wearing gloves or using a towel to pick up the bird is also an option.

Q: Can I catch any diseases from a wild bird?

A: The chances of a human becoming ill from handling a wild bird in Hawaii is extremely remote. However, if you have pet birds you should not keep a wild bird in

the same area to prevent transfer of any virus or bacteria.

Q: I found a bird stuck to a glue trap. How can I get it loose?

A: Gently work vegetable oil or diluted Dawn dishwashing detergent into the feathers to melt the glue and release the bird. This method is recommended because if you cut the feathers off, the bird cannot be released until they grow back.

Q: Can I be injured by handling a wild bird in Hawaii?

A: The introduced species of birds in Hawaii are of no danger to humans. But certain federally protected birds such as sea birds, shore birds, and owls do have sharp claws and/or beaks. Use gloves to handle them, keeping them away from your face. Pick up an owl from behind with his talons facing away from you.

Wild Bird Rehab Haven is a 501(c)(3) charity manned by volunteers and financially supported by generous donors like you. Your tax-deductible contributions make possible our wild bird rescue and rehabilitation, and are truly appreciated!

www.wildbirdrehabhaven.org is a great website for additional bird information, including how to do a comprehensive visual examination of a bird and a list of

the most common medical problems in certain bird species in Hawaii. You can also sign up for free training classes, make a donation, and learn about volunteer opportunities.

If you are not sure what type of bird you have found, call us at 808-447-WBRH (9274). We will help you identify the bird. *Wild Bird Rehab Haven is authorized by the state to rehabilitate introduced species of birds.*

Seabirds can be taken to Sea Life Park on Oahu. Call 808-259-2537. You may offer a dish of water, but leave the feeding of a sea bird to an experienced rehabilitator. Place birds in a box with air holes, and transport as soon as possible. *Ground-nesting seabird parents are gone from dawn to dusk. Even with parents gone all day, do not disturb sea bird babies unless found in an unsafe place.*

For any bird in distress, seek advice as soon as possible. *Please do not wait for days before calling.* The sooner an avian illness or injury is addressed, the better.

Through rehabilitation resources & educational outreach, Wild Bird Rehab Haven makes a difference in our community by helping concerned citizens help the orphaned and injured wild birds of Hawaii.

***Mahalo for your kokua
on behalf of the birds!***