

# Wildlife; a baby's best chance is with its mother

By Cynthia Post, DVM  
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Sometimes it seems like winter will never end. But spring will soon be here and with it comes a new generation of wild animals. Spring is the busiest time of year at Procyon Wildlife. Not only are we inundated with orphaned animals, but we are swamped with phone calls from people who have found wild creatures and don't know what to do with them. So, here are a few tips in case you find an orphaned wild bird or mammal.

Let's start by dispelling a few myths. First, it is not true that mother animals will abandon their young if you have touched them. Animals know their own young even if they do smell a bit like humans. Secondly, animals rarely abandon their young. They have either left them in hiding or may have met with some adversity and were unable to return to the nest. Finally, some animals, especially birds, may look too young to be out of a nest but they're not. The parents are usually nearby and the young

are behaving quite normally for their species.

The first step in knowing what to do with a young animal is to determine if it is truly an orphan in need of care. Think about how that species normally lives when making your decision; this will help you in determining if the behaviours you observe are normal or not. If an animal is obviously injured (you can see an open wound or abnormal positioning of a wing or leg) it may require medical attention and should be brought to a wildlife centre. If there are no obvious injuries, the animal may be an orphan.

Do not assume that young birds on the ground are orphans or have fallen out of the nest. Young birds are often on the ground because they have jumped out of the nest and are learning to fly. They are not orphans; they are fledglings and their parents feed them on the ground until they fly away. Watch them from a distance and call a rehabilitator if no parent is seen within a few hours. You may put the bird on a branch to protect it from cats or keep your pets inside until the bird is safe. Nestlings lack feathers and should not be out of

the nest. Return them to the nest if possible (sometimes difficult to find) or take them to a wildlife centre.

Orphaned mammals may appear thin and may cry loudly if their mothers have been gone for too long since the last meal. Mammals that are hiding and whose mothers are nowhere in sight may not truly be orphans. Such is the case with rabbits and fawns whose mothers leave for long periods of time, cautioning their young to hide quietly.

So, if you find a fawn tucked away in the dense grass it's probably just waiting. However, if it's walking around alone, especially if it's crying, then it's probably an orphan. If you're not 100% certain that a mammal is an orphan, the best thing to do is to find the nest and return the baby to it. If a nest can't be found, the baby can be placed in a box, kept warm with blankets, and placed close to where it was found. If the mother doesn't return in a reasonable amount of time (this varies between species), then you should take the baby to a wildlife centre.

There are two important points to remember. First,

always call a wildlife rehabilitator if you aren't absolutely certain how to

proceed; we're here to help you. Second, and most importantly, a baby's best

chance for survival is with its mother, not with you or even with us.



Two injured, orphaned fawns recover in their outdoor pen at Procyon last summer.

## Memorial Hockey tourney in Alliston

The 3rd annual Chase McEachern Memorial Hockey for Heart Tournament is taking place in Alliston from February 26-28, at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre.

The proceeds from the Chase McEachern Memorial Hockey for Heart tournament will be used to continue placing lifesaving Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in schools and other public places in Simcoe County. To date there are AEDs in 66 SCDSB elementary schools, all 16 SCDSB secondary schools and one at the Education Centre in Midhurst.

Hockey for Heart is a series of adult, recreational level hockey tournaments taking place across Ontario. Teams enjoy an exciting three-game tournament while raising funds for the Heart and Stroke Foundation - Chase McEachern Tribute Fund. For more information go to [www.hockeyforheart.com](http://www.hockeyforheart.com)

[www.recyclemycar.com](http://www.recyclemycar.com)

# ANNOUNCEMENT

# The Times

The Times has commissioned these sales representatives to undertake a special subscription drive for The Times of New Tecumseth and Adjala Tosorontio. They will present a special offer and will be calling on homes to offer year-round reading of this newspaper at substantial savings over newsstand.



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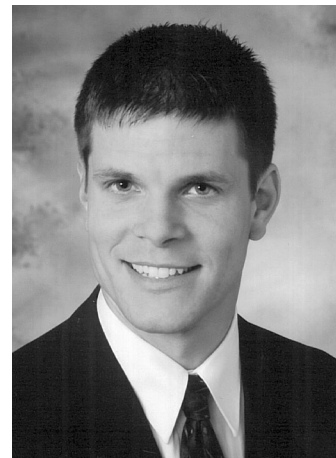
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