

Dept. of Natural Resources: Leave wild animals in the wild as you enjoy the outdoors this spring and summer

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MADISON, Wis. – Spring and summer are when people encounter wild animals the most. Wisconsin's [Keep Wildlife Wild](#) initiative urges people to call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or the Department of Natural Resources before assuming a wild animal is orphaned or in need of assistance.

Under Gov. Evers' [Safer at Home order](#), wildlife rehabilitation by licensed professionals is considered an essential service. To protect the health and safety of the professionals who provide this care to wild animals, many wildlife rehabilitators may need to modify and limit how that care is provided. This year, it is more important than ever to call your local wildlife rehabilitator before assuming a wild animal needs help. Visit the [Keep Wildlife Wild](#) webpage to find contact information for a wildlife rehabilitator in your area. Learn more about the Keep Wildlife Wild listen to our [Off The Record: Wild Wisconsin podcast](#).

If you come across a baby wild animal that appears to be alone, observe from a distance and give the animal some time to be reunited with its mother. Most often, a young animal seen alone is not truly orphaned and it is in fact under the care of its mother. Many of these situations resolve on their own when a young animal and its mother have time and space to be reunited. Remember to call first if you think a wild animal needs assistance.

"Young rabbits are left alone in their nest, concealed by grass or vegetation. The mother returns to feed her young and then leaves to keep predators away," said Amanda Kamps, DNR Wildlife Health Conservation Specialist. "Young raccoons are often seen playing in trees or yards without their mother, but she is nearby."

Fledgling songbirds leave nests without parental supervision and before they are capable of full flight. Fawns are born with spots and very little scent to hide them from predators. A fawn found lying still and by itself should be left alone. Even if you do not see the mother, she is likely nearby and keeping a close watch.”

By keeping wild animals in their natural environment, everyone in Wisconsin can protect wildlife welfare and assist rehabilitation centers in this time of need. Here’s what you can do:

- Observe wild animals from a distance;
- Know where to find [Keep Wildlife Wild](#) resources and information about wild animal natural behaviors;
- Know how to determine if a [bird](#), [mammal](#), or [fawn](#) is in need of assistance;
- Never attempt to handle or rehabilitate a wild animal on your own;
- Contact a [wildlife rehabilitator](#) if you have questions or think an animal needs assistance;
- Monitor pets when they are outdoors;
- Be careful with yard work to avoid disturbing a wild animal den or nest;
- Cover window wells, use chimney caps, seal up spaces to prevent animals from getting into these spaces;
- Make potential food items, like pet food and garbage, inaccessible to wild animals;
- Stay alert for wildlife on roads; and
- Be careful if trapping and relocating adult wild animals so you do not unknowingly separate wild animal parents and their young.

“These are all things that people can do year-round, but in spring time with young wild animals being born, it’s important to do what we can to keep wild animal families together,” said Kamps. “People should resist the well-intentioned temptation to interact with a young animal they think is orphaned, because human interaction may do more harm than good.”

The [Keep Wildlife Wild](#) initiative works to help prevent orphaned or injured wildlife situations. Please do your part to help Wisconsin’s wildlife and the licensed wildlife rehabilitators in this time of need. Remember, a young wild animal’s best chance of survival is with its mother.