Spring is here. For a wildlife rehabilitation facility, that can only mean one thing - Baby Bird Season! It’s during this time of year that we receive our smallest (and most numerous) patients. For this reason, we wanted to include a list of tips on what to do when you come across a baby bird.

Picture this: You are walking down a sidewalk and notice a baby bird. What do you do?

1. Identify any potential dangers. Is the baby near a road? Are there any dogs/cats around? If the answer is yes, then remove the baby from the situation. Put it in a small box with a soft cloth and move on to Step 2.
2. Recognize any signs of injury/distress. You don’t need to perform a full physical exam, simply look for any signs of bleeding, limping, or heavy breathing. If it has any of these symptoms, give our Bird-gency line a call and we will guide you through what to do next! If it seems healthy, then proceed to Step 3.
3. Determine the age of the baby. We know this sounds like an impossible request, but baby birds can be easily separated into three different categories: Hatchling, Nestling, and Fledgling. Knowing the age of the baby can determine whether you need to provide active support or moral support (from a distance).

* Hatchlings are fresh out of the egg and are visibly pink--naked of almost all feathers. They rely exclusively on their parents to feed them and, if found, require immediate help.
* Nestlings are a couple days to a couple weeks old and have “poky” feather shafts growing in as well as soft, fuzzy feathers on their head/wings. While they also rely on their parents for food, they are much more active than nestlings and also require fairly quick assistance.
* Fledglings are almost (if not entirely) ready to leave the nest. They are fully feathered and are learning how to forage for food on their own. Because of this, they often leave the nest a little too early. Not to worry! They typically figure out how to fly within a couple days and are ok on the ground in the meantime.

4. If the baby is healthy, then its parents must be missing it. Look around and see if you can identify a bird of the same species or find a nest.

* + If you are unable to locate any parents, call our hotline: 305-852-4486 extension 1.
  + If you spot a parent *and* you can find a nest, that’s perfect! If the nest is too high or you feel uncomfortable climbing a ladder but you have another smaller tree nearby, that will work just as well. Proceed to step 5.
  + If you spot a parent but cannot find a nest, then see if you can find a basket or container with small holes in the bottom and add a handful of leaves/grass. Proceed to step 5.

5. It’s time to attempt re-nesting! If you did happen to find an accessible natural nest, place the baby back in it and give it some space and time for its parents to check on it. If you had to craft your own, then you can attach the makeshift “nest” to a nearby tree using string or zip-ties. At this point, it is all up to the parents. You can resume your walk and come back by in an hour to check on it. If the nest site is in your yard, just peek out of the window occasionally. The more space you can give the nest, the better. If you see a parent stop by to check in, it means you have successfully re-nested!

If more than 4 hours go by with no apparent parental activity, then give our hotline a call and we will guide you through what to do next: 305-852-4486 extension 1.