

# ENJOY NATURE, BUT ... WILDLIFE IS BEST LEFT WILD

By Lauren Azoury

**S**pringtime is a fun and active time outside. We hope you go explore your backyard or a West Bloomfield park this season!

This is the time of year when most animal babies are being born. It is also the time of year when nature centers get the most phone calls from well-intentioned and concerned residents regarding potential abandoned or injured wildlife. However, in most scenarios, wildlife is best left wild.

Sometimes a little nature education can go a long way, rather than taking the animal from the wild. Here are a few examples of wildlife we get calls on:



## Fawns

Many people have concern for what appear to be abandoned fawns. However, it is not uncommon for mother deer to leave their fawns for a full day and return at sunset. Fawns have no scent and great camouflage, which help them go all day without being found by

predators. Adult deer stay away as a survival technique, which minimizes the scent of the mother near the fawn.

## Baby Rabbits

Humans care for their young for 18 years or more, but that is not the case in the wild. Eastern cottontail rabbits are considered old enough to be independent of their mother once they are 4-5 inches long with fur on their bodies, soon after their eyes open.

They may appear to be cute and helpless babies but they are not in need of human care or their mother's care. If you find a disturbed nest with younger unfurred babies, return the rabbits to the nest with the least amount of handling possible and cover with dry grass. Mothers return at dawn and dusk.



## Baby Birds

What if you find a baby bird? If the bird is injured, call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator (see below). If the bird is feathered, it is a fledgling and it is normal behavior for it to be hopping around on the ground and learning how to fly. More than likely, its parents are nearby keeping a close eye.

If the bird has no feathers, than it may need help. If you can find its nest nearby (using protective gloves for yourself) place the bird back in its nest. You can also make a substitute nest using a berry basket or butter tub with holes for drainage with dry grass. It is an old wives tale that the mother bird will not return if it can smell a human on its baby.

## Wildlife Rehabilitators

There are a few scenarios when a human can be of help – when you are positive the parent is dead or when the animal is injured. If this is the case, please contact a local licensed wildlife rehabilitator. A list can be found on the Michigan DNR's website here: <https://www2.dnr.state.mi.us/dlr/>.

We encourage you and your family to get outdoors this spring to explore and enjoy all of the natural beauty West Bloomfield has to offer. If you come upon a baby animal, we hope the tips above are helpful and if nothing else, remember, wildlife is best left wild.

Lauren Azoury is a Park Naturalist Supervisor for West Bloomfield Parks.

