



Corvid Aid

info@corvidaid.org

At Corvid Aid, we encourage the public to get involved in rescuing birds. Armed with the correct information, they ensure that all injured and orphaned wildlife has a chance of survival and often makes a full recovery so they can be returned to wild wherever possible.

What should I do if I find an injured bird?

If the bird is obviously injured, or in danger, the bird should be brought into your home where its injury can be assessed. Then, follow these steps:

Place the bird in a secure box and keep it warm. This is achieved either by placing the bird under a heat lamp (if you do not have one of these, use a desk lamp with a 40w coloured bulb above the box) or, alternatively, you can use a hot-water bottle filled with hot (not boiling) water wrapped in a towel underneath the bird.

Leave the bird in a quiet place for 20 to 30 minutes. This will allow the bird to both warm up and calm down – the bird may be in shock.

Try to get some fluid into the bird. Use Lactade or international rehydrating fluid (one tablespoon of sugar and one teaspoon of salt mixed in one litre of warm water) – this provides energy and can quickly pick the bird up.

Administer the fluid through a small syringe, just a few drops at a time. Do not press the plunger down as this may force the fluid into the lungs and kill the bird. Just let a few drops come out at a time until the bird starts to swallow the liquid – and even then, do not be tempted to overdo it.

Later, if the bird starts to pick up, offer the fluid in a budgie drinking fountain or a small bowl. Be careful with this and make sure that the bird does not drown in the bowl if left unsupervised.

After about an hour, try the bird with some food. Soaked cat biscuits, or turkey mince soaked in a little warm water (to soften it into a paste) are suitable foodstuffs. If the bird fails to eat, put a small amount into the mouth and stroke the throat until the bird swallows. Once the bird starts taking the food, leave a small amount in a bowl. Check the bird regularly.

Try to find a wildlife friendly vet. This is easier said than done – especially with corvids. You may need to ring around a few to find one that is willing to help. Some vets do not charge for wildlife, so make sure to ask.

Above all, don't give up on the bird. Do not let the vet put the bird down unless there is no hope for it at all. Some vets think that putting down wildlife is the only appropriate solution – though this is usually because they cannot be bothered making an effort when there is no money to be made. Remember that you are the one in control; tell the vet straight that “this is a living creature and deserves the same help and respect as a cat or a dog”.

After this, you may find you have a corvid in desperate need of love and attention. If you feel you are up to the responsibility, you might want to care for the bird full time (but read our care guide on the website for more information first). Alternatively, you may want to get in touch with us and ask our advice on re-homing the bird.

What should I do if I find an orphaned bird?

In the spring, we get loads of baby corvids in. Some are brought in quite unnecessarily, whereas others really do need our help.

The problem is that corvids generally leave the nest before they are unable to fly. If the bird is a fledgling (fully feathered and standing) the chances are that its parents are not very far away. Leave the bird alone for an hour or so

(unless it is clearly in danger) to see if the parents return. Keep a close eye on it, but remain out of view. If there is no sign of the parents returning, you will have to take action.

If the bird is a nestling (not fully feathered and not standing), unless there is any chance of getting it back into the nest, it will need your help. Take the following steps:

Pick the bird up and put it in a strong box with soft bedding. Make sure the bedding is something the bird can grip. Nestling corvids can suffer from a condition known as ‘spraddle leg’ if they are kept on a slippery surface. Keep the bird warm, using a heat lamp or the water-bottle method mentioned above. The baby will probably be very hungry and will be “gaping” for food.

Offer some soaked cat biscuits (soaked in warm water for about 30 minutes, until soft). Feed until the bird is no longer gaping. Do not try to force them down if the bird seems full. Baby crows are great in the fact that they will usually gape at anything they see and so do not present a problem with hand-rearing. You can also try feeding turkey mince soaked in a little warm water. Baby birds do not need to drink as they should get all the moisture they need in the food they get.

Feed the corvid(s) every hour, starting at 7:00am and finishing at 10:00 to 11:00pm. At Corvid Aid, we do not give night feeds as they do at some rescue centres. This works both for the birds, and for us!

If the bird is very young, it will need to be fed hand-rearing mix until it starts to feather up. Unless you have reared birds before with corvids this age we would strongly recommend you either contact us or another rescue centre as it can be tricky for beginners hand-feeding rearing mix through a syringe.

If you intend to rear the bird yourself, once the bird is weaned (this happens when the bird is feathered and mobile) **it is vital that you cut all human contact.** Place the bird in an enclosure away from people. The only contact should be under unavoidable circumstances such as feeding and cleaning. Try not to talk to the bird.

Corvids are notorious for imprinting. Even if you cut all contact with a hand-reared bird, without the company of their own kind, there is a strong chance that they will identify more with humans and thus become unsuitable for release. For this reason, at Corvid Aid we try to rear in groups, though even then imprinting can still happen.

Please remember it is against the law to intentionally imprint any wild bird.

If you have gone out of your way not to imprint a bird but it still happens, are you prepared to look after the bird for the rest of its life? Crows are a big responsibility. You cannot sell the bird (it is illegal) or release a tame bird (again, illegal under the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960). It is your responsibility. If you can no longer care for the bird, it must be found a new home. This is difficult, as it is classed as a wild disabled bird. You must give the bird to another suitable keeper, which is harder than it sounds.

Although hand-rearing wild corvids is a wonderful honour, we feel this should only be undertaken by people who are aware of the facts, and who only take on the commitment if they fully intend to try their best to get the bird back into the wild.