

## Baby birds- what should we do?



Little Tweet is a baby sparrow that was brought into the surgery. At this time of year it is common to find young birds apparently alone on the ground.

This is a normal stage of development for many birds – they tend to leave the nest before their flight feathers have fully developed. A few days are spent hopping about on the ground and during this time the young bird's parents will continue to provide food and attention. Most young birds that we worry about being abandoned do actually have parents close by – however the adult birds are likely to stay out of sight when people are around.

The RSPB advises that these fledgling birds should be left in the wild, under the care of their own parents. Removal of a young bird from the wild is an absolute last resort and carries a much lower chance of long term survival.

If the bird is in a dangerous location (for example close to a busy road or at risk from predators such as cats) then it makes sense to carefully move it to a safer site. Birds do not have a sense of smell, so picking up a young bird will not make its parents reject it. Make sure that you only move the bird a very short distance so that it is still within hearing distance of its parents. If there is no safe place on the ground it is recommended that you place the bird in a box or other container wedged in a bush or tree. If you then leave the bird alone, its parents should return to care for it until it is able to fly away.



Once Little Tweet had been admitted to the surgery, vet Nia and the nursing team took responsibility for rearing her. Nia has a special interest in wildlife

rehabilitation and a great deal of patience! Little Tweet was fed on moist cat food and mealworms every 2 hours using a syringe and tweezers. Gradually we watched her grow and learn to fly. At this point, her cage was moved to a sheltered spot at the base of a dense hedge.



Little Tweet will continue to receive regular feeds, but the length of time between feeds will gradually be increased to encourage her to begin feeding herself from food provided at the bottom of the cage. Once we are sure that Little Tweet is able to feed herself, the cage door will be left open so that she is free to come and go as she pleases. Food will be provided daily for as long as Little Tweet needs it but we hope that before too long she will join the other sparrows in the garden.

Further information about baby birds can be found at [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk).