

Wild Bird Rehabilitation

We give the best possible care to injured, sick and orphaned wild birds.

RAISING HOUSE SPARROWS & STARLINGS

In the State of Missouri, raising most baby birds is illegal. Birds are protected not only by Missouri, but by the Federal Fish & Wildlife Department.

There are three exceptions to these rules. They are pigeons, House sparrows and starlings. These three birds may be hand raised for release in anyone's home. No permit is required.

The recipes in this paper are used for both starlings and House sparrows.
They are not sufficient for raising other species.

Raising baby house sparrows & starlings can be an experience -- both rewarding and at times tiresome. There will be times when you're sure half the neighborhood birds have joined yours in screaming for food. Luckily these birds develop quickly and before you know it they're taking off.

This paper is meant to give guidelines to successfully raise these birds. There is no one way to house and feed baby birds, but if you keep in mind basic needs - variety of food, clean surroundings, consistency of feedings- you should do well.

How often and how much birds are fed depends on their size and development. Naked hatchlings with eyes closed will need feeding every 15 or 20 minutes, morning until night. Fortunately unlike our babies, birds sleep through the night. No 2 AM feeding!! After ten days or so, the time will be increased to every 2 to 3 hours.

Birds will need to fly well and eat on their own before they can be released, so keep in mind the space they will need.

Again, a word of caution: other species of birds, e.g. robins, mockingbirds and woodpeckers need a more specific diet to develop healthfully

Heating pad (for nestlings)
Distilled water (for nestlings)
Baby food: chicken, egg yolk
Science Diet Cat food (or other high protein cat food)
Pedialyte
Wild bird seed
Feeding implements such as: rounded tooth picks
 coffee stirrers
 water color paint brushes
 tweezers (blunt nose)
Live insects (meal worms, crickets)
A vitron (liquid vitamins) or other bird vitamins.

HOUSING

Basics:

1. Clean surroundings
2. Warmth when needed
3. Correct photo periods (enough sunshine)
4. Hiding place to provide privacy from prying human and animal eyes.

NAKED HATCHLINGS WITH EYES CLOSED:

85 - 90° F

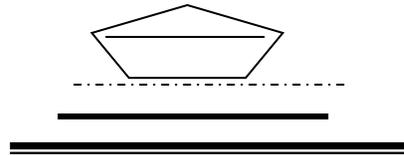
moist air - a small jar with water - covered with holes in lid.

close fitting nest

Start with a small bowl or berry basket as a nest. Line the bottom with a folded paper towel. Wind a length of unscented toilet tissue (2 - 3 feet long) loosely around hand to form lining of nest. If hatchling is very tiny you may need to add second lining. Add two or sheets of toilet paper, pushed into

center of nest. (This can be changed as nest gets soiled). Place nest on towel over heating pad (low setting).

nest, then
towel, then
heating pad, then
cake rack (safety factor)



Add a small thermometer to nest to check temperature:

EYES OPENED AND FEATHER COVERING:

Use a laundry basket. Cover the holes inside with fiber glass screening. The screening can be attached with a hot glue gun. (If using tape, make sure no sticky ends are loose to catch small birds) Line the basket with newspaper and cover with a paper towel for both easier cleaning and to provide a non slip surface for small birds. The top can be covered with screening. To secure screening, either clip to edge of basket, or hem screening and thread elastic through hem. Use twigs for perches, high enough that birds tails do not scrape the bottom.

ACTIVE FLEDGLINGS

For larger caging, put one laundry basket inverted on another and clip together. Use a playpen, adding ropes for perches. A large Appliance carton is another idea. Use a small screened porch or breezeway.

Use your imagination, but keep the housing basics in mind. make sure part of the cage has access to sunshine -- either on an enclosed porch or sunny window (open window) Sunshine is vital for developing strong bones and feathers.

Caution: If cage is put outside at any time, make sure it is predator proof. Predators include cats, hawks, raccoons, dogs etc. Never leave over night without strong wire protection.

DIETS

HOUSE SPARROWS

[note: for nestlings, you can use a commercial diet such as Exact™]

nestlings - 50 - 50 mixture of meal worms (drowned in water with three or four drops of Avitron) and Hi Pro (soaked in warm water).
add baby food chicken or baby food egg yolks to mixture (about 1 Tbl to 1 cup mixture) the mixture should be on the soupy side.

fledglings - Use dry cat food or dog food soaked in warm water. Hand feed small pieces. Add insects, meal worms, grain, seeds and green food to diet.

DEVELOPMENT:

Eyes open within 1 week

Feathered by 10 days

Flying well by 2 -3 weeks

Eating on own by 5 weeks (needs some supplemental feeding)

RELEASE:

At 6 to 7 weeks, with back-up feeding available, such as a bird feeder.

STARLINGS

[note: for nestlings, you can use a commercial diet such as Exact™]

nestlings - 50 - 50 mixture of insects and Hi Pro (soaked in warm water)

fledglings - variety of meal worms and other insects, dry cat food (soaked in warm water), wheat bread. Nuts, apples and fruits (chopped), sunflower seeds, greens, alfalfa spouts.

DEVELOPMENT:

Eyes open within 1 week

Flying well by 3 weeks

Self feeding at 4 weeks

RELEASE:

Tail feathers full length and bird completely self feeding (7 - 8 weeks)

FEEDING SCHEDULE

Nestlings should be fed every 15 to 20 minutes at least 12 hours during the day. It is important they are fed consistently for proper development. Watch their crops (right side of neck just under lower beak) to make sure food empties before feeding again. Feed only a bite at a time. (Notice the size of their mouths - don't fill mouth completely). Nestlings' diet should have a higher ratio of liquid to solid. Make it soupy. When feeding, make sure to put the food to the back of the mouth, beyond the glottis or windpipe opening at the back of the tongue. If the bird has trouble swallowing, dribble a drop or two of water on the outside tip of the beak. Make sure the birds have swallowed before giving more food. Sometimes a little stroke under the chin will get babies to swallow. Be sure to clean drips from around bird's faces. Dried food can not only clog the nose and eyes, but can lead to infection.

Once the eyes have opened and feathers are well started, you can stretch out the feeding intervals to every 30 minutes, then 45 minutes, hourly and eventually every 2 hours. By the time they hop out of their nests they should be on the hourly schedule.

As soon as fledglings are routinely perching add small dishes of chopped meal worms and fruit, and soaked dog or cat food. Offer food from the dish with blunt nosed tweezers, curved hemostats or fingers. They are not expected to eat much on their own at first, but need to start on the road to self feeding.

Also make sure there is a small dish of water in the cage. For sparrows, add one or two rocks to dish so that they don't fall in the dish and possibly drown. Remember a young bird is not necessarily preening itself yet so may not be water proof.

By 4 weeks, they should be self feeding. Don't let their screaming for hand feeding sway you. A little supplemental hand feeding (2 or 3 times a day) is all right, but they must be encouraged to feed on their own without being dependent on you, for a successful release. It is also important that the bird is "water proofed". Twice a day they should be misted and a shallow dish should be available for bathing. This stimulates preening. Without waterproofing, feathers will not repel water. This will not only inhibit flying, but will also effect their ability to stay warm.

Finally, a quick list of hazards that could cause problems:

Aerosol sprays, fumes etc.
Glass doors, uncovered windows
Open toilets, open pots on stove Vacuum
cleaners, area behind refrigerator Pets,
children, guests
Drafts from air conditioner, fans, heaters
Doors: birds love to perch on the tops of doors!
Predators - never leave a bird cage unattended unless double wired and locked.

Remember, even if birds are confined to their cage, escapees can and will run into trouble, just like toddlers.

If there are any questions, or if we can help in any way, please feel free to call us at:

WILD BIRD REHABILITATION

314-426-6400