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WANGARATTA VETERINARY CLINIC

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Friendly service and professional care for all.

Have you found a young native bird in Wangaratta or surrounds?

We are so lucky to have such amazing birdlife in North East Victoria and we all want to do what we can to protect them. So what do you do when you come across a young bird that can't fly?

Birds such as chickens and ducks are relatively well developed and mobile at hatching. However most wild birds hatch in a very underdeveloped form and are raised in a nest. At several weeks of age these birds leave the nest. On leaving the nest they are not, however, 'instant adults'. They can only walk and fly weakly and are supported by their parents in the nest vicinity.

At this stage they are very vulnerable to cats, dogs, cars and unfortunately people. Some well-meaning people mistakenly 'rescue' these chicks when in fact this stage of steadily becoming stronger around the nest is quite normal. Catching and removing these chicks from their parents' care gives them an almost zero chance of survival in the wild. Young birds must spend time with their parents to learn all of the lessons and survival skills that they will need as adult birds to survive ie what is food, how to find it, what is danger, where are the safe trees to sleep at night and even how to interact with other birds of the same species.

If you find a young bird on the ground that cannot fly, leave it where it is. If however you think that it is in danger then the chick can be placed back in the nest or if this is not possible on a branch in a safer location nearby. Nearby dogs and cats should be confined until the chick can fly sufficiently.

It is against the law to remove a native bird from the wild and keep it as a pet. This includes if the native bird has been removed from the wild because it is injured. People (including vets) who want to keep such birds for anything more than a few days must apply to the DSE for an appropriate permit. Any injured bird brought to a veterinary clinic that able to be rehabilitated is sent to a licensed wildlife carer until it is able to be released.

In Victoria it is illegal to rehabilitate any introduced bird species for release into the wild. Introduced birds include sparrows, blackbirds, starlings, Indian mynahs and lace neck doves. These birds are viewed by the government in the same way as foxes, rabbits and cane toads. Veterinarians will offer humane euthanasia free of charge for introduced injured birds (or any injured wildlife).

As spring approaches, you will notice more of these L-plater baby birds trying to find their wings! Ensure they are safe from predators but please leave them alone so they can grow and develop with their Mum and Dad.

Extracts from <http://www.melbournebirdvet.com/wild-bird.aspx>