



IF YOU FIND NON-INJURED WILDLIFE

LEAVE ORPHANS WHERE THEY ARE

One of the most common presentations to our facility is the “orphan” bird or mammal. It is important that we define what an orphan is up front. An orphaned animal is one that has been abandoned by the “parent.” The vast majority of the cases presented are not truly “orphans.” Instead they are animals that have been removed from functional nests or found near a nest as they were exploring their environment. The parents are often nearby gathering food or protecting their territory.

Many citizens are quick to collect these animals because they feel that they are abandoned. In these cases, all attempts should be made to replace the animal back in its nest. The old wives tale that the “parents” will not accept the animal after it has been touched by humans is incorrect.

Once the orphan is placed back in its original location, it is critical that humans stay away from the area. The nest should only be observed from far away. If the “parents” can see you, they are not likely to return to the nest.

In Louisiana, it is illegal to raise wildlife unless you are a trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitator registered with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Although the intentions of the individuals locating the

“orphan” are good, these animals have very special needs that cannot be met by untrained individuals. Providing the wrong type of care often leads to abnormal growth and suffering for these orphans. Staying in their natural environment provides the best chance of survival.

WHY THE LSU VTH CANNOT ACCEPT NON-INJURED ORPHANS

Baby animals often require feeding every 1 - 2 hours. While we are a 24/7 facility, the constant, hands-on care needed to adequately care for orphaned animals requires more people and resources than we can provide. This creates an undue burden on our students and staff and takes them away from other critical cases in the hospital.

LICENSED REHABILITATORS

If you truly feel that an animal is abandoned, you can contact a wildlife rehabilitator who is licensed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and can legally and properly care for orphaned wildlife. A list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators is available online at wlf.louisiana.gov/rehab.