

Wildlife

Facts and Fables

"But I heard somewhere that:"

Fable: *If you touch a baby bird or baby bunny, the mother will reject or kill it.*

Fact: Mothers will not reject their young but many baby wild animals have no body odor and predators cannot smell them. If you handle a wild baby, you put your smell on it and a predator may detect it, get curious and find the baby and eat it.

Fable: *I found a baby rabbit nest and the mother hasn't come back.*

Fact: Mom usually only feeds 2 or 3 times during the night and only for short periods of time. She built the nest, delivered the litter and has been caring for them without being observed. She will continue to do so. If you are not sure, take a piece of yarn and make an "X" over the nest before evening. Check the nest the next morning to see if it has been moved.

Fable: *My cat is de-clawed and wears a bell. She cannot injure wildlife.*

Fact: Cats can hunt successfully without claws but cannot defend themselves against attack from larger animals so they should never be left outside. An infant bird or mammal can not flee from the cat, even if it hears the bell.

Fable: *A baby deer alone in the woods is probably orphaned.*

Fact: The mother doe does not stay near her baby very long so her smell does not attract predators. But she is nearby and watching, even if you don't see her. Please leave it alone.

Fable: *I haven't seen the mother dove come to her nest for hours. She has probably been killed.*

Fact: A mother dove will leave and eat seeds, then sit and digest her food, which becomes a liquid in her crop (throat). She will then return and feed this liquid to her babies, which they drink from her crop. The whole process takes some time so she only needs to feed them 3 or 4 times each day.

Fable: *This spring, I found a large owl with bumps on its head and it cannot fly. It probably has a head injury and needs help.*

Fact: This is most likely a fledgling Great Horned Owl. It leaves the nest before it can fly and the parents follow and care for it. The owl is fine and doesn't need your help. But BEWARE. This bird, although very young, is quite capable of inflicting severe injury to you or your pets with its long sharp talons.

Fable: *If you see a night predator (such as a fox) out during the daytime, it is rabid.*

Fact: Not always. If a mother has babies in the den she may be hunting. Animals also can be routed from their den accidentally. You should never approach any wildlife, though, especially if its behavior is uncharacteristic.

Fable: *An animal carries rabies for 10 days then dies.*

Fact: Animals and humans can carry rabies for up to/over 1 year. The disease becomes active and transmissible when the virus enters the brain and saliva. This stage lasts approximately 10 days. Once rabies reaches this final stage, it is always fatal.

Fable: *You must be bitten or scratched to get rabies.*

Fact: Rabies is most commonly contracted through a bite wound from an infected animal in the last stage of the disease, but can also be transmitted through infected saliva or brain tissue coming in contact with an open cut or a mucous membrane such as the eyes, nose and mouth.

Your Rehabilitator