



Frequently Asked Animal Questions

I found a baby bird. What do I do?

Baby birds found on the ground are not always as abandoned as they appear. Birds rarely abandon their young, so it is quite likely that the parents are somewhere close. If the bird has a good bit of feathers, a stumpy tail, and can hop around on its own, it is a fledgling and it needs to be left alone. It can be put into the top of a shrub if there are predators present. If it does not have any feathers, it is a hatchling. A substitute nest can be made for it by using a small woven basket and pine straw. Put the nest in the tree nearest to where the bird was found at a level that can be safely reached, then leave the nest alone. Constant checking can deter the parent from returning. Attempting to take care of a baby bird yourself is not the best solution. It is illegal to raise an orphan without a permit, newly-hatched babies must be fed every 15 minutes, and no human could ever do as good a job as the parents would. It is a myth that birds can smell human scent on their babies. Contact a licensed rehabilitator.

I found a baby squirrel. What do I do?

Baby squirrels can easily be returned to their parents. Fill a small woven basket with pine straw, put the baby squirrel in it and cover the squirrel lightly with another layer of pine straw. Then attach the nest to the nearest tree to where the squirrel was found at a level that can be safely reached, then leave the nest alone. The mother will usually come and retrieve the baby and return it to the original nest or another one if the original has been destroyed. (Squirrels construct 4-5 nests simultaneously and move the babies every few days to a new nest.) Constant checking can deter the mother from returning for the baby. Taking care of the squirrel yourself is not a good idea. It is illegal to raise an orphan without a permit and no human could ever do as good a job as the parents would. Squirrels, like most mammals when they are young, are easily acclimated to humans. However, it is illegal to keep them, they do not make good pets, and their being used to humans would make them unable to survive in the wild. Contact a licensed rehabilitator.

A bird hit my window. What can I do for it?

When birds hit a window, they sustain some type of head trauma. This can range from very light to so severe that it causes almost instant death. Most birds, however, can recover in a short amount of time. If you find a bird that you think has hit a window, put it in a small, covered cardboard box for approximately two hours. After that time, take the box outside and open it. If the bird does not fly away, then it will require a professional rehabilitator.

I have found a turtle crossing the road. Where should I take it?

Turtles crossing the road should never be removed from the area. Many turtle species have excellent homing instincts and will try to return to their territory. This means they could end up crossing a lot more roads than the one you found it on. Just pick the turtle up and set it across the road in the direction it was heading. If you put it on the wrong side of the road, it will just turn around and go back across the road again.

I have a snake in my yard. How can I tell if it's venomous?

Snakes are a much maligned creature with many myths surrounding them. One of the most common myths about snakes is that if it has a triangular head, it is venomous. This is not true.

Although most venomous snakes do have triangular heads, this trait cannot be used to determine if a snake is venomous or not. Most snakes have the ability to flatten their heads, which gives them a triangular appearance. This is especially true if the snake is irritated.

There are only two venomous snakes that are found in our: the Copperhead and the Canebrake Rattler.

The Copperhead's bite is not fatal. They are very easy to ID, as they are the ONLY snake in GA whose dark bands are fatter on the sides than on the back of the snake, appearing as though Hershey's kisses run down its sides. Additionally, until they are approximately 1 foot long, their tails are fluorescent yellow-green. [Copperhead ID Online](#)

A robust, venomous snake, the Canebrake rattler is equipped with a broad triangular head, vertical pupils and heat sensitive pits. The body color may be yellow, gray, dark brown or black, with dark, V-shaped crossbands across the back and a dark copper stripe that runs the entire length of its body. The pattern may not be obvious if the body is very dark. The head is usually not patterned and is covered with many small scales. A distinct rattle on the end of a darkly colored tail produces a buzzing sound when vibrated. When young, the rattlesnake has only a small button on the tail. Body scales are strongly keeled and the light colored belly is flecked with dark spots. The best way to educate yourself about the different types of snakes to be found in your yard is to get a field guide appropriate to your area of the country. Snakes do play a role in the natural balance of even a small ecosystem like a yard. Without them, you would probably be overrun with small rodents. Learn to respect them, not fear them. [Rattlesnake ID Online](#)

I have a raccoon coming into my yard. What can I feed it?

Raccoons are very opportunistic feeders. They will eat almost anything that is available, including your pet's food. Raccoons should not be fed or allowed to eat your pet's food. They will come to depend upon that food for their source of nutrition. Their diet should come from natural foods that they can obtain from the habitat around them. Having a raccoon in your area that is dependent upon humans for food can also cause problems for your neighbors. **Raccoons are a rabies-prone species in Georgia and purposely bringing them closer to humans is never a good idea.** Remember, even if your pet is vaccinated against rabies, there is still a chance that it can contract the virus.