



Bld. Mt. News - 6 August 1981

Mother Nature is best for baby wild animals

Nancy Langford

We all know the saying "April showers bring May flowers." With the showers and flowers come baby animals. It is the time of year when the state Fish and Game Department gets many calls from people who have picked up baby animals thinking they have been abandoned by parents. This causes many problems for the animal and for Fish and Game.

First, the parent is, in most cases, very nearby, keeping a close watch on its baby, hoping you will not see the baby and will pass on by. Remember this desert or mountain is the animal's home — it belongs here.

Second, it is illegal to pick up most wild animals. U.S. game laws and migratory bird treaties strictly forbid possession of

wildlife without a permit from the state Fish and Game Commission. People pick up these young animals because they are cute. But when they get the animal home, they find that they don't know what to feed it or maybe it becomes more trouble than they thought. Then they call Fish and Game and want to be relieved of the animal.

This causes many problems for Fish and Game because it then becomes their job to try to raise the animal until it is old enough to be released into the wild again. Animals such as javelina are herd animals, thus making it difficult to successfully release them. Many of the young animals are still nursing and they need their mother's milk. They can become dehydrated very quickly. Fish and Game reports that the most

commonly picked up animals are deer fawns, javelina, and birds that have fallen from their nests.

We've all had the experience of seeing or finding a baby bird and wondered what to do with it. A bird that is mostly naked and can't walk or hop is a nestling. He probably fell or was blown out of his nest. This little guy is in trouble and will die in a short time if not helped. The old wives tale about once a bird is touched by a human will not again be accepted by his mother is just not true. So if you can, pick him up and warm him in your hands and find his nest and return him to it.

If the bird has feathers and can hop and

fly a little, he is a fledgling. He has probably left the nest on his own and his parents are still feeding and caring for him. Do not rescue a fledgling unless you are positive he is orphaned or in danger. The best recourse is to watch the bird for several hours and see if the parents are around. In most cases they will be.

So, if in your travels you happen upon a baby animal, resist the urge to pick it up. Remember, the desert is its home and wild animals are very capable of caring for their young. Modern man is finding with all his computers and technology that when it comes to wildlife, Mother Nature still knows best!