

BRIEFLY



Susan Shaler

Just because an animal is alone in the wild, it does not mean it has been abandoned. Often, a parent is waiting close by for you to leave. If you care, leave them there.

***New feature!* Ask the Biologist**

I found a fawn in the high grass on my property. I think it's been abandoned, what should I do?

Every spring and summer, people contact DEC to ask about newborn and just-hatched wildlife they found. Many people assume that these young wildlife are abandoned and need our help to survive. But in most cases, this is a mistake and our well-meaning actions generally do more harm than good. When people mistakenly “rescue” young wildlife, they quickly discover they can’t really provide proper care, and often the young animals die. Those that do survive in our care have missed the natural experiences that are critical for learning how to fend for themselves in the wild. A young bird crouched in the yard, or a young rabbit in the flower garden are not generally alone. Often, wild animal parents stay away from their young when people are near, waiting nearby for you to leave. In the case of white-tail deer, fawns are often left alone during the first week or so after birth. They have not been abandoned. Fawns are almost scentless and immobile and the doe spends

only brief periods of time with them to avoid attracting predators. So, if you find any young wildlife, enjoy your encounter but keep it brief and maintain some distance. Remember the rule, “If You Care, Leave Them There.” Keep any pets inside for a few hours so they won’t disturb the animal.

Not only is it illegal to keep any wild animal as a pet, but wild animals do not make good pets—they are not well suited for life in captivity and they may carry diseases that can be given to people.

If you find a young wild animal that is obviously injured or orphaned, there are wildlife rehabilitators who can help. Volunteers licensed by DEC, wildlife rehabilitators are the only people legally allowed to receive and treat distressed wildlife. For more information about young wildlife visit www.dec.ny.gov

—*E. Stegemann*