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RAISING THE YOUNG

Spring is a wonderful time of birds building nests and creating the miracle of baby birds. Maybe you have a nest or two in your yard, or have seen one in your neighborhood. This is also a challenging and precarious time for parent birds to protect their nests and work tirelessly to find enough food for the constantly hungry and rapidly growing nestlings. Young songbirds need soft foods such as caterpillars; it may take over 5,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of chickadees! Abundant sources are needed to help nestlings survive.

As the young birds fledge and learn to fly and forage on their own, they face many challenges (finding enough food) and hazards (strong storms and predators). We can help these young birds survive in our community with some basic actions. First, cats should be controlled. Outdoor cats are one of the most significant threats to birds; they are estimated to kill more than 2.4 billion birds each year in the U.S. and Canada. Baby and fledgling birds on any property cannot protect themselves from cats, even bell-wearing

cats. Keeping cats indoors prevents this sad situation. The Nether Providence Township Code, Section 115-4(C) provides: “It shall be unlawful for an owner or custodian to permit his dog, cat or other domestic animal to trespass or commit a nuisance upon or otherwise harm private or public property or to interfere with the rights of the owners thereof.”

Bird window strikes can also be lethal for both young and adult birds, but can be prevented by applying window decals with an ultraviolet component that birds can see, or by using other window treatments (www.birdtown.pa.org/bird-collisions-practical-steps).

Being struck by a car can be fatal to young (and mature) birds as well. We can each help prevent this outcome by observing local traffic laws. The speed limit in Nether Providence Township is 25 m.p.h. unless otherwise posted. Sadly, fast-moving cars have been observed striking and killing birds attempting to fly from one side of local streets to the other.

If you find a baby bird out of the nest in your yard, a regional bird-rescue organization, Tri-State Bird Rescue, recommends the following: a baby bird with visible skin can be returned to its nest, but a fledgling bird with feathers should be left so the parents can find and help it, unless there are hazards such as an outdoor cat around, or if it is injured (see www.tristatebird.org for details and specific information).

If you find an injured wild native baby or adult bird, it is illegal to try to treat it yourself: it can be treated at a licensed wildlife rehabilitator only. In our area there are two: Tri-State Bird Rescue in Delaware, and Schuylkill Nature Center in northwest Philadelphia. Unfortunately there aren't any licensed wildlife rehabilitators in Delaware County.

- Tri-State Bird Rescue: 170 Possum Hollow Road, Newark DE 19711; every day 9-5; best to call ahead and for advice: 302-737-9543

www.tristatebird.org

- The Schuylkill Center Wildlife Clinic: 304 Port Royal Ave., Phila PA. 19128; any day 10 – 4; drop-off 9 – 6: 215-482-7300, x2

www.schuylkillcenter.org/departments/wildlife/

Being aware of these hazards, how to prevent them, and knowing what to do if they occur, can help nesting songbirds in our community to succeed.