



Lesson 2

Keep Wildlife Wild

Now, divide your class into small groups. Distribute one dilemma card to each team. Separate teams into various corners of your room. You have two courses of action, depending on your time:

1. Ask each team to select a leader who will quietly read the dilemma aloud. Encourage teams to talk quietly among themselves as they discuss what course of action they should take to resolve the dilemma. After the teams arrive at their first course of action, hand team members a Wild Card appropriate to the focal species of their dilemma. Ask them to read their card and if the information they learned requires them to modify their first course of action.
2. If time permits, ask teams to now turn over their assigned dilemma card. Ask the team leader to quietly read aloud each of the four potential courses of action listed on the back of the dilemma card. As each course of action is read, team members should discuss the pros and cons of that action.



Barn Swallows bigstockphoto.com

Many birds are adapted to living near people's homes. American Robins, House Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and even Barn Swallows, shown above, readily raise their young in nests placed on or around our dwellings.





Captive Raccoon alamy.com

Wild animals held in captivity become very stressed. Stress can lead to illness and sometimes death. Licensed wildlife rehabilitators know the best ways to reduce stress levels in captive wildlife.



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Ask each team leader to carefully formulate his or her team's response. Now, ask students to return to their assigned seating. Direct each team leader to the front of the classroom to report what his or her team's dilemma was and what the team decided was the best course of action to take **and WHY**. Ask the class if they agree or disagree with that team's decision.

As the classroom instructor, refer to the information presented in the **Possible Actions--Teacher Info** cards (pages 55-63) to help guide the classroom discussion. This is particularly important if your class had time to discuss each of the four potential actions on the back of their dilemma card. **This information is critical to help your students reach a common understanding about what actions are appropriate** and what actions are not if they find a young wild animal alone in the wild. **Be sure your students know that they should NEVER chase, hold or pick up a wild bird or mammal by themselves.** Instead, they should tell an adult about the wild animal situation and ask the adult to contact the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

Finally, ask the students the followup question presented in the **Note section** on the **Possible Actions--Teacher Info** cards.





Lesson 2

What a Dilemma!

Student Dilemma Cards

Print off the following eight Dilemma Cards using two-sided printing. The front of each card poses the dilemma. The back of each card presents four possible actions that students may possibly take to resolve the dilemma. Once the cards have been printed, cut each sheet in half. This will give you a total of eight dilemma cards.



American Robin fledgling bigstockphoto.com

A fledgling is a young bird that is nearly fully feathered. Its eyes are open, it is alert and it can flap its wings though it may not yet be able to fly any distance. This fledgling robin is at the stage of life when it is supposed to leave the nest. One or both of its parents is probably nearby. Parent songbirds fend for their young for a week or more once the young have fledged.



What a Dilemma!

It's a May afternoon and you are in the yard playing with your dog. Suddenly your dog goes over to an area, sniffs and digs around a bit and comes back with a baby bunny (called a **cottontail kit**) in its mouth. It drops the kit at your feet. The kit doesn't appear to be injured--just a bit wet from your dog's saliva. The kit still has its eyes closed. You look where your dog had just been and find a nest of kits. The mother cottontail doesn't seem to be anywhere around.

What would you do?



What a Dilemma!

You are in your backyard playing soccer with your younger sister when she accidentally kicks the soccer ball into the woods behind your house. As you enter the woods to retrieve the ball, you discover a baby squirrel (called a **kit**) lying on the ground. The kit does not appear to be injured. It is about 3-4 inches



long and its eyes are still closed. As you survey the surrounding area, you see what appears to be a squirrel nest high in a nearby tree. You don't see any adult squirrels in the area.

What would you do?

Possible Actions

1. You put the cottontail kit back in the nest, covering it as best as you can. You then leave the area with your dog, and watch from inside the house to see if the mother cottontail returns.
2. You take your dog inside the house and tell your mom who grabs her leather garden gloves. You show her where you found the kit. She carefully picks it up with gloved hands and places it back into the nest. Then she covers the kit with the remains of the nest. She says your dog must be on a leash when outside, until the kits have left the nest.
3. You know your friends would be envious if you show them the kits, so you pick them up and carry them--wrapped in the hem of your T-shirt--into your house. You intend to raise them and keep them as pets. What a neat school science project this will be.
4. You just learned about wildlife rehabilitation in your class. You remembered that the DNR webpage has a list of rehabilitators so you go online and jot down the address of the closest rehabilitator. You then tell your parents who then place the kits in a cardboard box and drive you and the kits to that rehabilitator as soon as possible.



Possible Actions

1. You leave the squirrel kit exactly where you found it, being careful not to touch it and hope for the best.
2. You take the squirrel kit inside your house, put it in a cardboard box with a non-raveling cloth (so it can't get tangled up) and offer it warm milk using an eye dropper.
3. You tell your parents about the squirrel and ask them to call the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator to get their advice.
4. You take the squirrel to school to show your teacher.



What a Dilemma!

It's a lovely Saturday morning in late May. As you walk to your friend's house in a wooded neighborhood, you hear a bird scolding near some bushes in a neighbor's yard. You walk over and find the neighbor's cat crouched in the shrubs with a young baby bird (called a **nestling**) in its mouth. Two other nestlings lie dead on the ground. You shoo the cat away. The adult bird has flown off. Searching deeper into the bushes, you locate

the plundered nest with one remaining nestling inside. **What would you do?**



What a Dilemma!

You and your friend are walking home from school together. You are almost home when you notice a baby white-tailed deer (called a **fawn**) wandering around the neighborhood. It doesn't look injured and isn't crying. You don't see any other deer in the neighborhood. **What would you do?**



Possible Actions

1. You pick up the nestling and take it to your friend's house, where the two of you watch it for awhile. You then find a small shrub in your friend's yard and craft a makeshift nest out of grass and leaves and place the nestling in the nest and leave.
2. You knock on the neighbor's door and tell him about the bird nest with one nestling in it. His cat has killed two nestlings. You politely ask him to call a wildlife rehabilitator for advice and to watch to see if the parent bird returns. You also suggest that he keep his cat indoors.
3. You quickly run home and tell your mom or dad what happened. You ask your parent to go online and look for the **Keep Wildlife Wild** website to find the list of wildlife rehabilitators and give the nearest one a call to get advice on what to do.



4. You take the nestling and the nest back home with you and put it in a cardboard box in a corner of the garage. You then go out and dig worms to feed the nestling. You intend to raise the tiny bird and keep it as a pet.



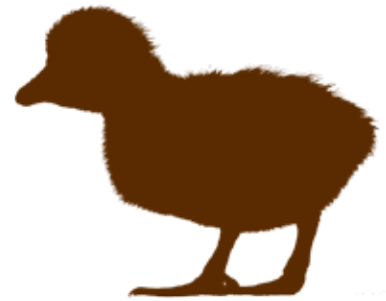
Possible Actions

1. Scare the fawn away. There are cars and dogs in your neighborhood, and the fawn isn't safe here.
2. Pet the fawn. It's really soft, and probably needs your help. It would make a really cool pet. Maybe you can talk your parents into letting you keep it.
3. Go home and tell your parents, so they can call the WDNR or a wildlife rehabilitator for help. The fawn probably shouldn't be in the neighborhood, but you don't know what you should do. But your parents probably know!
4. Ignore the fawn. It doesn't look hurt, and you've seen deer walk through the neighborhood before. Its mom probably left it here for safety, and she will be back soon.



What a Dilemma!

One spring day, you are walking with your friends near the pond in your neighborhood park. You hear a peeping sound, and see a downy baby goose, called a **gosling**, wandering on its own on the shore, looking and sounding very distressed. You don't see any other geese around. **What would you do?**



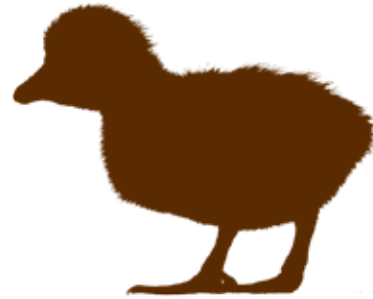
What a Dilemma!

An early morning spring storm with high winds causes a big old tree in your yard to fall down. No one is hurt, but when you go outside after breakfast, you find three baby raccoons, known as **kits**, on the ground next to the fallen tree. They are small and do not yet have their eyes open. There is no mother raccoon in sight. **What would you do?**



Possible Actions

1. You and your friends rush after the gosling and catch it. You then tell your friends that you'll accept the responsibility to take the gosling home to raise it by yourself. You know your mother wouldn't mind.
2. You quickly go home and tell your parents what you've found and ask them to call the Wisconsin DNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice on what you should do.
3. You and your friends shoo the gosling out into the water where you think it will be safer.
4. One of your friends reminds you that the local petting zoo is nearby, so you take the gosling there and ask the zookeeper to raise it so it can be on display when it reaches adulthood.



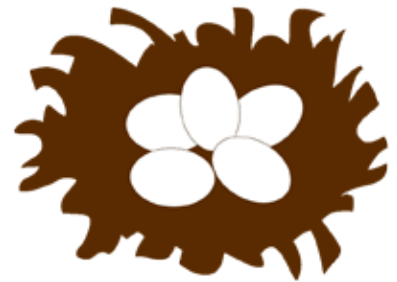
Possible Actions

1. You pick up the kits and bring them into your house. Then you go online to see what to feed them so you can take care of them until they are older.
2. You decide to leave them where they are and tell your parents what you've found, and ask them to call the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator to get advice.
3. You go back inside your house, and watch out your window from a distance to see if the mother raccoon returns to her kits.
4. You call your friends to come over so you can show them the kits. Each of your friends picks up a kit and cuddles and pets it. They are so small, you know they appreciate the extra warmth and attention.



What a Dilemma!

It's a great May morning and you are playing Pokemon Go in your yard with some friends when you find a mother duck sitting on eggs in a nest under some shrubs. You call your friends over to see and the mother duck flies away. One of your friends touches one of the eggs. **What would you do?**



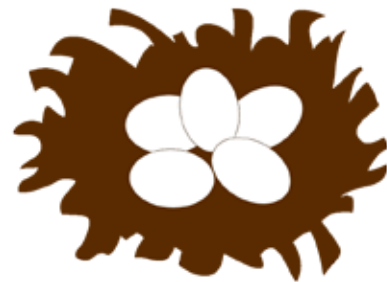
What a Dilemma!

It's June and spring cleaning time. One of your chores is to clean the fireplace. It is full of dust and spider webs. While cleaning, you hear noises coming from inside the chimney. It's too dark to see so you grab a flashlight and look up. You are startled to see many eyes shining back at you! Panicking to get away from the multi-eyed monster, you quickly find a parent. Together you check out the mysterious creature and find that the eyes belong to a family of raccoons whose mother has decided your chimney makes a great nursery for her babies, known as **kits**. **What would you do?**



Possible Actions

1. You've heard that once a person touches an egg or a baby animal its parents will reject it, so you take the eggs home to try to hatch them.
2. You and your friends leave the area right away so the mother duck will feel safe enough to return to her nest.
3. You gather up all the eggs and the nest and move them to a place that you think is safer.
4. You and your friends each pick up some of the eggs and hold them in your hands to try to keep them warm until the mother duck returns.



Possible Actions

1. You decide to wait until the kits have grown and they will naturally leave on their own. You tell your parents about the situation. They decide to bar the opening of the fireplace with plywood. Once the raccoons have left, your dad will put a cap on the chimney to prevent any animals from coming back.
2. You tell your parents you learned what wildlife rehabilitators do. You ask your parents to contact Wisconsin DNR to get the phone number for a local rehabilitator. The experienced rehabilitator will probably give you good advice on how to handle the situation.
3. You figure that smoke will chase the raccoons away and encourage them not to come back. But, you don't want them to inhale a lot of smoke all at once, so you start a small fire, then make it bigger for more smoke.
4. You believe you can lure the raccoons out with a treat. You grab some sandwich meat from the fridge and hold it in the fireplace to see if the raccoons will climb down and take it from your hands. You'll wash your hands after you've moved them out.



What a Dilemma!

Possible Actions--Teacher Info Cards

Refer to the eight **Teacher Info Cards** (pages 56-63) that give background information relating to each of the four possible actions for each of the eight student **Dilemma Cards**. Each **Teacher Info Card** has a small graphic icon that will help you correspond it to the appropriate student **Dilemma Card**. As each team leader reports his or her team's response to the four actions, you, the classroom instructor, should read through the information presented on the corresponding **Teacher Info Card**. If the team leaders do not give the appropriate answers, use the **Teacher Info Cards** to share the correct answers with the classroom.



Raccoon kit bigstockphoto.com

It's important for your students to understand that they should NEVER chase, touch or pick up a wild animal, even if it is a "cute baby." Wild animals are well-adapted for survival and they know how to kick, scratch and bite. Some, unfortunately, may carry diseases that may be transmitted to people or pets. Your students should ALWAYS alert an adult and request that they contact WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice.



Lesson 2



Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Cottontail Kit Dilemma

1. No! Children should never pick up a wild animal by themselves, especially with bare hands. Touching a wild mammal with bare hands is a bad idea because wild animals MAY carry diseases or parasites that may be transmitted to people and pets. Young wild mammals are capable of kicking, scratching and biting. Since cottontail mothers return usually at dawn and dusk, watching from a window may prove frustrating and fruitless.
2. This decision has some good points. Taking your dog inside the house and keeping it there is wise because once a dog finds a nest, it will keep pestering the nest and likely harm the kits every time you let your dog out. Keep your dog leashed until the kits have grown and left the nest. Involving your parents is a good thing, too. Children should never try to rescue a wild animal on their own. In this case, the mother knew enough to use leather gloves. Even though she didn't contact a wildlife rehabilitator for advice, she must have learned, somewhere, how to handle cottontail kits.
3. Science project or not, this is definitely NOT a wise decision! It is illegal to keep wild animals as pets. Wild animals do not make good pets. They have special diets difficult to duplicate under captive conditions. As young animals grow up, their defensive behaviors emerge and they become capable of kicking, biting and scratching. Also, sometimes wild animals carry diseases or parasites (even fleas!) that may be transmitted to people and pets.
4. There are some pros and cons to this answer. While trying to locate the nearest wildlife rehabilitator is a great decision, the best decision would be to call the rehabilitator FIRST rather than just assuming the rehabilitator will automatically accept the cottontail kit. Not all rehabilitators accept all wild animals. More importantly, if the kit's mother is alive and nearby, she normally would try to return to the nest to care for its young. If you move the kit away, you've reduced or eliminated the possibility of the kit being raised by its rightful mother. Call the rehabilitator first, and he or she may well direct you to the information provided in decision #2, above.

Note: For further discussion, ask "How can you tell if a mother cottontail is attending her kits overnight?" **Answer:** The best way of monitoring a cottontail nest is to place long strips of dried grass, small twigs or even construction paper strips in a crisscross pattern over the nest. In the morning, if the pattern has been disturbed but the kits are still in the nest, mother cottontail is taking care of her young. If the pattern hasn't been disturbed, the mother may have died and the child's parent should call the local rehabilitator for advice.



For more information, visit

dnr.wi.gov

search keyword "Keep Wildlife Wild" or "Rehab"

Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Squirrel Kit Dilemma

1. This is a legitimate option if the weather conditions are mild. However, if it is cold and/or raining, then it would be best to call the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator to get their advice considering the specific conditions.
2. Unless directed by a wildlife rehabilitator, it would be best to leave the kit outside near the tree/nest where it has a better chance of being found by its mother. The kit should only be taken inside if directed to do so by a wildlife rehabilitator and with the assistance of an adult. Feeding the kit cow's milk can cause diarrhea, dehydration and even death.
3. Overall, this is the best approach to take. What will the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator tell your parents to do? Have your students read the Squirrel Kit Wild Card. They'll learn that their parents should find a shallow cardboard box and place a non-raveling cloth in the bottom. Then, with gloved hands, they should place the squirrel kit in the box and leave it at the base of the tree that has the nest in it. Everyone can then go inside and observe from a distance to see if the mother returns. Since squirrels are active during the day, it is very likely that you will see the mother squirrel return.
4. No! This option is simply wrong and would not be the correct thing to do under any circumstances. However, if you and your parents follow the steps in #3, you could take a quick photo of the squirrel kit in the box or create a poster describing the steps you took to reunite the kit with its mother. Then you could share the experience with your classmates to help them learn how to **Keep Wildlife Wild**.

Note: For further discussion ask "What should be done if the mother squirrel does not return after several hours?" **Answer:** The parents should call the WDNR or a licensed rehabilitator to get further instruction.

For more information, visit

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Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Songbird Nestling Dilemma

1. No! This is NOT wise. Children should NEVER pick up a wild animal. Nestlings are fragile and can easily be injured. Wild animals may have diseases that people and pets may catch. Moving a nestling or a fledgling from the area in which you found it will make it nearly impossible for the wild parents to locate their young. Moving a nestling (or a fledgling) to a new area may well mean the death of the young bird.
2. Under certain circumstances, this might be a good decision, but only if you know the neighbor very well and your parents would be OK with you approaching him on your own. Ideally, you should involve one of your parents first. It would be wonderful if the neighbor would take your advice to keep his cat indoors. Cats that are allowed to roam kill billions of birds and other small wild animals in the U.S. each year, and many die young. It's best to leave the area so the parent bird can feel safe enough to return to tend to its young.
3. This decision is wise. Involving adults (parents or teachers, for instance) is a very good idea. Then they may contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for helpful advice. If your parents know the neighbor well, they may be willing to suggest that he keep his cat inside so both the cat and wildlife will be safer. With a little effort, domestic cats can readily adapt to life indoors and live a long and happy life.
4. No! This decision is definitely not a good idea. Children should NEVER touch a wild animal because they may carry diseases, parasites or fleas that can spread to people or pets. Most people are inadequately trained to care for a young animal, particularly an infant animal that requires extra special handling and feeding.

Note: For further discussion, ask "What's the difference between a nestling and a fledgling?"
Answer: A **nestling** is a naked, downy, or partially feathered baby bird that is too young to be out of the nest. Its eyes may still be closed and its head may be wobbly. They need assistance and cannot fend for themselves. A **fledgling** is an older baby bird that has most of its feathers, though its flight feathers may not be fully formed. Fledglings are **supposed** to leave the nest, often when they are not fully prepared to fly. The act of leaving the nest is called "fledging." Fledglings will remain on the ground or in tree branches and flap their wings, as they learn to fly. Their parents are busy finding food to keep their fledglings full. If a predator lurks nearby, parent birds will often make noise, flap their wings rapidly and act as though they are injured to try to draw the predator's attention to them and away from their young. Fledglings usually do not need your help.



For more information, visit

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Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Fawn Dilemma

1. This is not an option. Scaring the fawn from the area where its mother placed it in the first place could mean that the mother doe won't find her fawn.
2. This is not an option. It is illegal to keep wild animals as pets, and it's not in the best interest of the animal. A wild animal has specific needs that people cannot meet. A young animal's best chance of survival is with its mother. Also, although you should never handle a wild animal, particularly with your bare hands, it is a myth that a mother will abandon her baby if she smells human scent.
3. This is an option, but not the best option. It is normal for a doe to leave her fawn unattended for long periods of time; keeping fawns hidden and alone is actually an adaptation to protect them from predators. A wildlife rehabilitator or the WDNR will tell you to leave the animal alone.
4. If the fawn is quietly walking around and is not in immediate danger, this is the best option. The mother doe left the fawn in a protected areas and fawns will sometimes get up and move around. The fawn will find its way back to that protected spot. However, if the fawn is in immediate danger from cars or pets, you may get an adult to help you slowly, quietly and gently guide the fawn away from hazards and back to safety, being careful to watch out for your own safety as you do so.

Note: A final point for class discussion is, "What should be done if the fawn seems injured or is making loud crying noises?" **Answer:** Your parents should call the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for further instruction. If a fawn is obviously injured or has been wandering and making loud crying noises for more than an hour, the fawn may be orphaned. Remember: only a licensed wildlife rehabilitator has the knowledge to care for an orphaned wild animal!

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Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Gosling Dilemma

1. No! This decision is not a good one because children should NEVER touch, chase or capture wild animals, particularly with bare hands. Wild animals may carry diseases, parasites and fleas that can spread to people and pets. Only wildlife rehabilitators or adults under the direction of a licensed wildlife rehabilitator should try to capture a wild animal--once it has been determined that the animal is truly in need of help. Chasing wild animals stresses them, and depending on the animal, it may feel cornered or trapped and may turn on the chaser to defend itself. Also, keeping the gosling as a pet is illegal in Wisconsin. Only licensed wildlife rehabilitators may legally keep wild animals in captivity with the goal of raising young ones to maturity or healing sick or injured wild animals so that all may be returned to the wild.
2. Calling for help is an excellent decision. Even better is to first check out the Wisconsin DNR **Keep Wildlife Wild** webpage which has links to Wisconsin's licensed wildlife rehabilitators who can provide expert advice. The DNR webpage also has downloadable pdf files that discuss how to handle a situation in which you find what you think is an orphaned bird, mammal or fawn. If information cannot be obtained from the website, then call WDNR at 1-888-WDNR-INFO for additional help.
3. Chasing wild animals is never a good idea as mentioned in #1, above. In addition, there is no guarantee that the family group to which the lone gosling belongs is even in the area. So getting a gosling to the relative safety of water may not be all that is needed to save it. You should call WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice.
4. The zoo may not want the animal--then what? At a minimum, the person finding the gosling should CALL first before just capturing it and taking it to the zoo. The zoo may or may not have a licensed wildlife rehabilitator on staff. Licensed wildlife rehabilitators are best trained and equipped for handling truly orphaned animals and they have the goal of releasing the animal back to the wild as soon as the animal is able to successfully care for itself. A life in the wild is a much better ending than being held captive in a zoo.

Note: A final point for class discussion is, "What if the gosling is limping?" **Answer:** You should run home and ask your parents to call the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for further instructions. You should not try to pick up the injured gosling or care for its injury. Only licensed wildlife rehabilitators have the training and experience to treat injured wildlife.

For more information, visit
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Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Raccoon Kit Dilemma

1. This decision is not a good one. You should never pick up a wild animal and bring it into your house. This is very stressful to the animal. Only licensed wildlife rehabilitators are certified to care for sick, injured or truly orphaned animals. You cannot learn enough about caring for a wild animal by merely reading some information you find on a website; it takes training and experience. Also, Wisconsin law says you have only 24 hours to have a wild animal in your possession. This allows you enough time to transfer the animal to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator who is expertly trained and experienced.
2. Telling your parents about the situation and asking them to contact WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice is a good decision. Wildlife rehabilitators have the experience to be able to decide the best course of action.
3. Watching a wild animal from a safe and respectful distance is a good decision. However, you may be waiting a LONG time if you anticipate the mother raccoon's immediate return. She may do so, but only after dark. Contacting a licensed wildlife rehabilitator and asking their advice would be best. They can provide guidance on what to do if you don't see the mother return.
4. This alternative is not a good decision. You should **NEVER** pick up a wild animal, particularly with bare hands. Not only can wild animals kick, bite and scratch you, they also may carry diseases or parasites that you, your friends or your pets could catch. Since mammals do recognize human scent, picking up the young raccoon puts it at risk that a predator may smell your scent and discover--and attack--the young one.

Note: A final point for class discussion is, "What if one of the kits is clearly injured?" **Answer:** Your parents should call the WDNR or a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for further instructions. You should not try to pick up the injured kit or care for its injury. Only licensed wildlife rehabilitators have the training and experience to treat injured wildlife.

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Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Duckling Eggs Dilemma

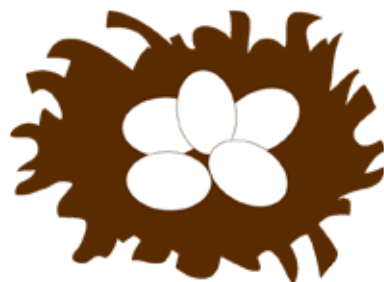
1. No! Taking a duckling egg home to raise is not an appropriate action to take. It is not true that a wild animal mother will automatically reject an egg or baby animal if a person has touched it, leaving his or her scent behind. Most birds have a poor sense of smell. Sometimes inexperienced waterfowl may leave their nest if they sense their nest has been disturbed, but experienced mothers will generally remain faithful to their nest. The other inappropriate behavior is touching the egg in the first place. When dealing with wild animals, it is always best to observe from a safe and respectful distance to determine if help is needed. If a young animal truly needs help, then the person should contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator as soon as possible. The list of rehabilitators may be found at the website listed below.
2. This decision is best. A wild mother usually remains committed to her nest--if her nest has not been disturbed. It is very likely that she will return if people leave the area as soon as possible.
3. This decision is not logical. The mother duck knows where she put her nest. She wouldn't have a clue where to look if you move the nest. In addition, by picking up the nest and eggs, you are leaving your scent behind, and while birds usually cannot detect your scent, a prowling predator like a raccoon, fox, or opossum could be inclined to check out the interesting new scent. Leave the nest where it is.
4. This decision is unwise because the mother duck will not return if you are in the area. Also, leaving your scent on the eggs will likely attract a ground predator to the nest. Also, there is increased risk of injuring the eggs if you pick them up.

Note: A final point for class discussion is, "What if you find a lone mallard duckling?" **Answer:** If you see a lone duckling or multiple ducklings without their mother, stop, look and listen for the mother and other siblings. If the rest of the family is not nearby or does not find the duckling(s) within an hour, please do not attempt to place a duckling with another duck family in the wild. If it is not the duckling's own family, the new "substitute" mother will reject the duckling and may even harm it by trying to drive it away.

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Possible Actions--Teacher Info

Raccoons in Chimney Dilemma

1. This action would be a good idea for several reasons. One, there is no direct interference with the wild animal. Two, telling an adult is always right and proper. Three, barring the fireplace with plywood keeps the raccoons from entering the house. Once your wild visitors have left the chimney from the top, then dad or another adult can put a cap on the chimney so no more animals can get in.
2. This is the best idea. Wildlife rehabilitators can offer the best suggestions in terms of encouraging your wild visitors to leave.
3. Not a good idea. Smoking the raccoons out may cause more problems in the long run. Even if mom can get out of the chimney, her kits might not be able to escape and they may die from smoke inhalation or overheating. Sometimes, the adults can't make it out either and may die trying to escape or by helping their kits to escape.
4. This is not a good decision for a few reasons. First, you are reaching your hand into a raccoon's personal space. When any animal feels threatened, their first instinct will be to protect themselves, usually in the form of biting. Not only will this hurt, but it may also spread disease! Raccoons are known to carry many diseases, including zoonotic diseases (transmissible from animals to people) such as rabies. Special note: 70% of adult raccoons and 90% of juvenile raccoons carry an intestinal parasitic roundworm, known as *Baylisascaris procyonis* (pronounced BAY-lis-AS-car-is, PRO-sy-OH-niss). Raccoons living in chimneys often drop their feces onto the floor of the fireplace. Such feces contain the eggs of this roundworm. It is rare for people to become infected with this parasite. However, ingesting the microscopic eggs of this parasite (in contaminated soil or raccoon droppings) can cause serious health problems. Reported disease has primarily been in children and almost all cases were a result of the ingestion of contaminated soil or feces.

Note: For further discussion, ask "What would you do if you woke up one morning and found a very young raccoon kit lying on the floor of a cold fireplace?" Answer: Contact Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the list of a local wildlife rehabilitator. The rehabilitator may suggest you place a large piece of plywood against the interior opening of the fireplace and then wait an hour or two. If the mother is alive and well, she will likely climb down and try to retrieve her kit.

For more information, visit

dnr.wi.gov

search keyword "Keep Wildlife Wild" or "Rehab"

