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Backyard triumph

The baby willy wagtails
their backyard nest.
PICTURE: ANNE-MAREE REARDON



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THIS is a true story about storm season and birds.

An Augustine Heights resident, Jasmine Kent, had a willy wagtail couple build their nest on her washing line in September.

The chicks hatched and the birds let her go about her work hanging out the laundry.

A fierce thunderstorm hit, causing the nest to fall off the washing line and the chicks were cold and wet. Ms Kent rescued them,

Quick-thinking resident gives gift of life to fallen nestlings



sight.

She scooped up the remains of the nest, placed it in a peg basket and hung it on the washing line, hoping the parents would return.

The next morning, both the parents returned and in a few days the chicks were learning to balance on Jasmine's fence with the par-

dried them and kept them warm as the parents were nowhere in

ents watching very alertly.

It's storm season, maybe your home is storm proof but many of our native birds' homes aren't.

During the spring many birds have mated and often young fledglings, or their nest, can fall out of trees during wild storms.

Would you know what to do? The age old myth that said: "Don't touch the chick because the mother bird will reject it" is simply not true.



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Fallen birds need a hand

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However, many people don't realise that taking the chick away is not best practice as the bird's parents may be still around.

They will teach the baby bird all its survival skills such as how to fly, what food to eat and where to find food.

But there are some things you can do to help its chances of survival.

Think twice before taking a nestling away from its parents

Michael Wilson, a Wildlife Carer from Wildcare Australia Inc, recently gave members of Springfield Lakes Nature Care an informative workshop about how to help a baby bird.

He said, in most cases, if the bird has feathers and is starting to look like its parents, it may have recently left the nest and is learning

to fly. You can place the bird back onto the branch of a nearby bush until the parents return.

Other chicks, such as plovers, brush turkeys or ducks are born with soft down and occasionally get separated from their parents, so the best thing you can do is place them under a bush or shrub and keep

an eye on them until their parent returns.

Sometimes you may need to intervene when the bird has little or no feathers and is unable to be returned to a nest.

Sometimes the nest is so badly destroyed, there is nothing to salvage. Michael explained how to make a simple nest by drill-

ing four large holes in the bottom of a plastic bucket and lining it with a layer of leaves or grass.

Place a long stick into the bucket ensuring that it is on an angle so there is enough length in the stick poking out of the bucket to enable the parents to get in and out of the bucket. You can then hang the

bucket with the chick safely inside on a branch of a nearby tree.

If you are satisfied that the chick has been reunited with its parents, there's no need to look after the chick.

If the nest is damaged and predators are about or you believe that the chick is injured, you may need to provide more help.

Wildcare Australia is always looking for volunteer wildlife carers.