



## News from The Environmental Learning Center

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contact: Heidi Hughes  
706.687.4090



### It's "Baby Bird" Time

These days, staff at Columbus State University's Environmental Learning Center can tell what wild birds are doing without stepping foot outdoors.

"We know when the first brood of baby birds has fledged by the number of phone calls we get," said Heidi Hughes, executive director of the Center. And judging by the recent surge in the number of calls that begin with "I found this baby bird," the season's first class of baby birds has just graduated from "nestlings" to "fledglings."

CSU staff has been watching a pair of Eastern Phoebes feed five voracious nestlings right outside their office window. Their parents coaxed them from the nest last week. Staff has spotted a number of Northern Mockingbird and Carolina Wren fledglings at Oxbow Meadows Environmental Park. And the Eastern Bluebirds nesting in boxes by the parking lot will be taking the big leap any day now.

While many neo-tropical birds continue to migrate through the Columbus area, resident species like Brown Thrashers and Northern Cardinals had a head start on building nests, laying eggs and brooding and feeding hatchlings. The phone calls start when the baby birds take the next step, when they leave the nest and have to "sink or swim," Hughes said.

"What's difficult for us humans to accept, is that most of these baby birds will be fortunate to survive their first year," Hughes said. "Nature can be cruel – and it's difficult for us to resist the temptation to 'rescue' baby birds when we see them on the ground." But, Hughes says: "Don't do it."

"It's against the law," Hughes added. "Unless you're a trained aviculturist and have obtained a state and federal license, you're more likely to harm the bird than help it. And you may be exposing yourself and your family to wildlife diseases."

"Please, don't bring wild animals to the Center," Hughes said. The Center does not operate a wildlife rehabilitation clinic and they don't have the facilities to care for injured and orphaned wildlife. If you have questions about Georgia wildlife laws, contact the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

- 30 -

*The Environmental Learning Center at Oxbow Meadows is an outreach program of Columbus State University  
in association with the Columbus Water Works and the Muscogee County School District*