

OAKLEIGH SOUTH

Let baby magpies be: rescuer

Chicks brought to shelter actually 'kidnapped' from parents

Emma Watson

EVERY spring, wildlife warrior Michele Phillips becomes inundated with baby magpies "rescued" off the streets, but the animal carer is warning people to leave the birds alone.

The chicks – unable to fly straightaway but capable of climbing up trees to a safe height – are on the ground learning to forage for food.

Ms Phillips said people bring the birds to her South Oakleigh Wildlife Shelter thinking they're distressed or have been abandoned.

"They're basically kidnapping them," Ms Phillips said.

Baby magpies leave the nest before their tail feathers have grown and learn to forage for food under the watchful eye of their parents.

BABY MAGGIE FACTS

- Unable to fly right away but can climb to safe height.
- Forage for food on the ground as mum magpie (usually swooping) watches.
- The babies are hidden in undergrowth overnight.
- Tail feathers still growing when they leave the nest.
- If in doubt call 9503 9872 or visit sows.org.au

Ms Phillips said unless they were obviously hurt, it was best to leave them be so they "learn to forage for food and feed themselves".

Ms Phillips has taken in 10 of the birds in the past week alone and they'll be in her care for four months until they're ready to find a new territory of their own.

"I'll take them down to the country ... because they haven't got an established territory," she said. "If I put them back (where they were found) four months later, they'd be intruding on another magpie's territory."

The shelter cares for dozens of animals – lorikeets, possums, galahs and other cockatoos.

If you are concerned about the welfare of a baby magpie, look out for its parents to establish whether it is in any danger.

The South Oakleigh Wildlife Shelter is a voluntary, non-profit organisation that rescues, rehabilitates and releases native wildlife.

The shelter also teaches students about Australian animals and what to do if you find injured wildlife.



Wildlife rescuer Michele Phillips with a rescued baby magpie. Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN