

## Leader

COMMUNITY NEWS



Wildlife rescuer Michele Phillips is urging people not to pick up baby magpies.

### INNER SOUTH

## Wildlife carer in South Oakleigh warns people can kill baby magpies with kindness

Emma Watson, Moorabbin Kingston Leader

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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 baby magpies — 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 because they think 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.

Ms Phillips said unless they were obviously hurt, it was best to leave them be.

"They've got to learn to forage for food and feed themselves," Ms Phillips said.

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, if I put them back (where they were found) four months later, they'd be intruding on another magpie's territory," she said.

The shelter has dozens of animals — lorikeets, possums, galahs and cockatoos — in its care.

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

The South Oakleigh Wildlife Shelter is a voluntary, non-profit organisation that rescues, rehabilitates and releases native wildlife. It also helps educate school students about Australian animals and what to do if you find injured wildlife.

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