

What To Do When You Find An Orphaned Squirrel

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Palmetto Wildlife Rescue & Rehab (PWRR)
803-969-0803 · palmettowildlifesc.com

Keeper of the Wild (Keeper)
843-636-1659 · keeperofthewild.org

1. Snap a photo first

Take a picture, then text it — along with your location and contact number — to Palmetto Wildlife Rescue and Rehab (PWRR) or Keeper of the Wild (Keeper), numbers above. A call works too, but a photo lets rehabbers assess age and condition right away. Texts are monitored closely — the nearest available rehabber will be in touch.

2. Check for Injuries

- Gloves are a smart precaution while handling the baby (this protects *you* — your scent will not cause a mother squirrel to reject it)
- Look for bleeding, broken limbs, or fly eggs

3. Determine Age

- No fur, pink skin, eyes shut → **Newborn**
- Some fur, darker tail, eyes shut → **Baby**
- Full fluffy tail, eyes open, active → **Toddler**

Before assuming the worst: squirrel mothers often relocate litters and leave them alone for a stretch. That alone doesn't mean the baby is abandoned.

4. Try to Reunite with Mom — Daylight Only

(Nighttime brings dropping temperatures and predators.)

- Place the baby in a shallow, lidless box with soft cloth that won't snag its nails (no towels or terry cloth)
- A cold baby may be ignored by mom — warm it gently first: a sock of dry rice microwaved 15–30 seconds, or a bottle of warm water wrapped in a T-shirt
- Leave the box at the base of the tree (or wherever the baby was actually found)

5. Watch & Wait

Playing a recording of a baby squirrel's distress call can help draw mom back — see crittercompassshi.com for a recommended recording. Place a speaker a few feet from the baby and wait from a distance.

Give mom time and stay out of sight so you don't scare her off. Keep people, pets, and activity clear of the area.

6. Unsuccessful, or Getting Dark?

Text a wildlife rehabber if you haven't already — a photo helps them guide you until pickup.

- Ventilated container with a secure lid
- Gentle heat — heating pad under half the container, or a warming method from Step 4
- Dark, quiet space (laundry room, bathroom, garage) away from kids and pets
- Resist checking on the baby too often — frequent peeking adds stress

7. Do Not Feed or Water the Baby

Baby squirrels can go several hours without food and can't digest anything while cold. Never give milk, formula, or water — the wrong food, timing, or method risks the baby inhaling fluid into its lungs, which is often fatal. It's counterintuitive, but it really is the difference between life and death.

8. Give Yourself a Hug

Whether mom returns or a rehabber steps in, you gave this animal a real chance.