Your Safety Comes First

If you come upon an injured bird of prey, or raptor, on or around your cabin or lake home property, you may feel compassion and want to help it. With some knowledge and assistance, you’ll be able to help the bird, but remember: your safety comes first. A seriously injured raptor is potentially dangerous. Even if the bird is docile at first, it is scared and unpredictable.

Guidelines for Helping an Injured Bird of Prey

Follow these guidelines, for your protection and that of the bird:

1. Handle wild birds only if necessary. The less contact you have with the bird, the more likely it will survive.

2. If you must handle or move a bird:
   - Wear heavy gloves and eye protection.
   - Be extremely careful, approaching the bird slowly and from the rear. Watch out for attacks from its beak and talons.
   - Wrap the injured bird for protection by using a blanket, towel, or jacket to carefully cover the entire bird, including its eyes. Gently fold the bird’s wings back against its body, keeping in mind that its wings and feathers are very easily damaged.
   - After wrapped, put the bird in a cardboard box, not a wire cage because of the need to protect its fragile wings and feathers. Use a box slightly larger than the bird; with less room it’s less likely to cause itself more injury. Give the box plenty of ventilation holes, particularly near its base.
   - Because birds have sensitive hearing, provide a warm, dark, quiet place for a calming effect. Keep it away from pets, children, sun, and parked cars on warm summer days as they overheat rapidly.
   - Do not feed an injured bird. It probably cannot digest food or water while injured, and if you try to feed it you may kill it. Even when in good health, a raptor’s dietary needs are delicately balanced.
   - Never try to rehabilitate a bird on your own. Always contact a professional such as the ones listed below. With their guidance, get the bird to a veterinary professional as quickly as you can.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service Faculty.