



Baby Raccoons

Welcome to the world!

There are seven species of raccoons in the world, but the only species found in Wisconsin is the common raccoon. Mother raccoons can have between two to five babies in a litter, and they will have just one litter per year. Baby raccoons are called kits, and they are typically born in early spring between March and April, but if a mother's first litter does not survive she may give birth to a second litter as late as June.

There's nothing better than the care of a mother!

For the first two to three months the kits will remain in their den, and you are unlikely to see them. By mid-summer, the kits begin supervised exploring and foraging. The young raccoons will remain under mom's protection for many months yet, and may even den with her through their first winter. Raccoon kits cannot be independent of their mother until October of their first year.

Home is where the shelter is!

Raccoons keep their kits in small enclosed dens. While the best locations used to be hollow trees and logs, raccoons have had to adapt to changes humans have made to their environment. Raccoons have discovered that under decks, sheds, and attics make a great place to keep babies warm and safe. Please do not use live traps to remove raccoons from these locations, as babies are usually left behind. Please use the advice below to make sure mom and babies stay together and can relocate to a new den safe and sound.

Healthy kits should be returned to their mother!

Unhealthy, truly orphaned or injured raccoon kits should be seen by a licensed wildlife rehabilitator right away. When you call a wildlife rehabilitator, you can expect to be asked questions to help ascertain the age and condition of the animal you are calling about, and determine if



the animal truly requires intervention and assistance. Snapping a quick photo of them with your cell phone is a great way to help a rehabilitator assess the kit's age and condition.

Some signs that a raccoon kit needs help include:

- bleeding wounds, bruising or broken bones
- raccoon is surrounded by or covered with a large number of insects (flies, maggots, mites, fleas, ticks, etc.)
- fly eggs present on animal's fur (Fly eggs look like tiny, white grains of rice.)
- the animal is cold, limp or unresponsive
- the animal was injured by a cat, dog or other predator
- a young animal is repeatedly approaching or following people or pets

If you're not sure if the kits are healthy, please call your local raccoon rehabilitator (please note that we are not licensed to care for raccoon at Dane County Humane Society's Wildlife Center). To find a raccoon rehabilitator in Wisconsin, call the Wisconsin DNR Service center at 1-888-936-7463 or visit their [online directory](#) (please note that not all licensed wildlife rehabilitators in Wisconsin are listed in the online directory, and other referrals may be received by calling the service center).

In absence of the problems listed above, unless you can confirm the mother is dead or no longer present, the first step is to try to reunite the kits with their mother.

Handle kits carefully!

Raccoons are in the animal family called Procyonidea which also includes coatis and kinkajous. Their unique family heritage makes them susceptible to diseases that also affect cats and dogs such as distemper and parvo virus. Gloves, carriers, towels or anything that has been used to handle or contain a raccoon should be disposed of, or treated with boiling water or a 10% bleach solution to avoid passing disease on to your pets.

A few important things to know before reuniting.

- **Please do not offer any food or water to the babies** – doing so can have deadly consequences.
- The babies see you as a predator – do not play with or excessively handle them.
- A baby's best chance for survival is with the care of its mother. Reuniting is the right thing to do!

Steps to reuniting baby raccoons:

1. If the baby still has its eyes closed, it will need a heat source. The raccoon should be warm before reuniting is attempted.
 - To keep the babies warm, use one of the following methods:
 - Fill a sock with uncooked rice. Microwave the sock in 30-second increments until it feels warm, but not scalding hot. It usually takes 2-3 minutes depending on the power of your microwave.
 - Fill a plastic soda or water bottle with hot water. Wrap the bottle in a soft cloth or put in a sock.
 - Use HotHands or other brand hand warmers.
2. Make a reuniting box. The container should deep enough so the raccoons cannot climb out. This can be a challenge with older more active kits.
 - Small, inactive kits can go in any cardboard box large enough to hold them.
 - Line the bottom of the container with a soft cloth or natural materials. Fleece, a t-shirt or other materials without loops work well.
 - Place the heat source in the box with the babies. Reheat first if necessary. Be sure the heat source is not in direct contact with the babies by using cloth as a buffer between them and the heat source.
 - If there is more than one baby, be sure they are snuggled together. This will help keep them warm.
 - Larger kits that will crawl out of a box can be placed in something taller, like a laundry hamper or kitchen trash can. These containers are small enough mother raccoon will be able to tip them over to collect her babies.
 - Line the bottom of the container with a soft cloth. Fleece, a t-shirt or other materials without loops work well.



- Very active kits can be placed directly on the ground with a laundry basket over top of them. As long as mom can see and touch the kits through the holes in the basket, she should be able to tip it over and free them.
- 3. Place the reuniting box in the area the kits were found. If the kits were in your home, place them just outside the house where the mother raccoon has been gaining access into the building. Make sure the access point is securely blocked off before attempting reuniting.
 - If it is raining, the babies will need protection from the elements to prevent them from getting wet. Be aware that plastic containers such as a trash can will fill with water during rains and can drown the babies if they are not adequately protected.
- 4. Leave the area, and keep pets and kids away from the reuniting box. You may keep an eye on the box from inside your house, but do not repeatedly go out to check on the box as this will also keep mom away.
- 5. Raccoons are nocturnal, so the babies should be left in the reuniting box overnight to give mom the best chance of coming to find them.
 - If the babies are all still there in the morning, bring the babies inside and call your local wildlife rehabilitator for further instructions. In the meantime, reheat the heat source and be sure the babies are still warm.
 - If one or more babies are gone, but some remain, mom was likely in the middle of moving the babies. Due to the size of the babies, mom raccoons can only move one baby at a time. If the remaining babies are still warm, allow mom a little more time to finish moving the babies and call your local raccoon rehabilitator for further advice.
- 6. To view a successful reuniting, check out this [video!](#)
- 7. Raccoon rehabilitation is a significant commitment of time and money, and most rehabilitators reach a point each year where they are full and unable to take any additional animals. If you are unable to get in touch with a raccoon rehabilitator, or rehabilitators do not have space for the raccoons you have found, please contact the Wisconsin DNR Call Center at 1-888-936-7463 for further advice.
 - Please do not attempt to raise the raccoon yourself. Not only it is illegal to do so, but they require very specific care in order to be successful if released back to the wild, and they do not make good pets. In addition, they may have parasites or diseases that could be transmitted to you or your pets. Please follow the advice given by your local raccoon rehabilitator or the Wisconsin DNR.

I've touched the babies. Won't mom abandon them?

No, a mother raccoon will not abandon her babies because you touched them. While it is advisable to handle them as little as possible, and to wear gloves while doing so, you can rest assured that mom will return to retrieve her little ones if she is able.

You can save the lives of baby raccoons by checking for den sites before you cut down or trim trees.

If at all possible, avoid taking trees down between March and September during breeding season. A variety of wildlife species use dead trees as homes and nests including raccoons, squirrels, songbirds, and some birds of prey. If the tree is a danger and must come down, you can help by

checking for babies in any hollows or cavities before you cut down the tree, and then make an effort to reunite them with mom after the work is done.

What if the mother raccoon nested in my house?

- The preferred option is encouraging mom to move the babies herself by making the current site less appealing. Using one or more of the deterrents below may encourage mom to move the babies to another site.
 - Sound deterrent: Play a loud radio or leave a wind chime as close to where the animal is staying as you can. When you see the animal in your yard, make a racket by clapping your hands, yelling or banging on a pan with a wooden spoon.
 - Sight deterrent: Reflective objects that move are best, so try shiny streamers or pinwheel that blows in the wind outside the entrance to the animal's den.
 - Smell deterrent: Used cat litter, vinegar, ammonia, or even human urine all suggest to an animal that a predator has marked this territory. Especially when refreshed every day these can be very convincing in getting an animal to find a new home.
 - Light deterrent: Eliminate the darkness in the den area by adding a shop light or some other bright light source near the entrance to the den.
- Although it is not ideal for the mother or her babies, a variation of exclusion techniques may be used during the breeding season to move a group of raccoons away from nesting in your home and still allow the mother to raise her babies. Call your local rehabilitator for specific advice for your situation. Steps include: 1) identifying the access point, 2) removing the babies and placing them in a reuniting box, 3) preventing the mother from gaining re-entry to the nesting location through the use of a one-way door, and 4) following the reuniting steps listed above. To learn more about removal of raccoons with young from an attic, please check out this [link](#) or this [video](#).

Once excluded, permanent changes to the habitat are important to prevent another animal from moving into the space. The use of welded wire to close off spaces under a shed or deck, or in the soffit of your roof to prohibit re-entry is key to mitigating future problems. Thank you for taking the time to humanely evict unwanted visitors in your home or yard.

Additional Resources:

- [HSUS Wild Neighbors](#)
- [Trapping is Not the Answer](#)