

First, we asked if the babies appeared to be injured. Did the caller see any blood? Were the owlets able to stand? Were they alert? Then, we asked the caller to go out where she had found the owlets, and look for a hole in a tree, which could possibly be the nest. None was found. After receiving photos of the owlets, it was obvious they were too young to fledge (fly away from the nest), and the fact that they were found all together suggested that they were being cared for by their parents.

We explained to the caller that the best caregivers for the owlets was their parents, and that owl parents often lead their babies on the ground to different places. An owlet on the ground is not necessarily in trouble. Because the babies were found together, and appeared to be in good shape, we believed the parents had been caring for them, and our recommendation was that the caller find a good-sized, leafy bush, place the owlets under it, and leave them alone. We asked them to check on the babies the next morning and let us know if they seemed to have been injured overnight, or were in distress.

One of the hardest things to do in wildlife rescue is to convince a caller that it's best to put the animal they've just "saved" back out into the wild, and let nature do its thing. In this case, the caller took our advice. The next morning, we called to check on the owlets, and there was no sign of them under the bush.

Case closed? Nope.

The following day, we received a call - again from Berne - about three owlets found in the same area. Again, the caller had seen the babies, feared for their lives, put them in a box, and brought them into their home. Again, we asked if the babies looked injured. They did not. We explained to the caller that these same babies had been found two days earlier, and that, because they were still all together, their parents were most likely taking care of them. Our recommendation was to put the babies back outside, in a protected place, and leave them alone. This time, our suggestion was met by strong resistance and, finally, a refusal. The caller ended up driving the three owlets to another rehab facility two hours away, where they are being well cared for.