

Home Country

Sitting by as the baby bird perished

When we first noticed the baby sparrow, here at the house, it saddened us all. He had fallen from his nest and was slowly walking around the front yard under the tree while his mother and father had an absolute fit.

We knew we were looking at a dead baby bird, as it was only a question of who does it, where it is done, and how long before it happens. Years of experience in these kinds of things have taught us the finality of a baby bird falling out of a tree. Would the end come from a cat, or from a raccoon wandering up from Lewis Creek, or a snake? One of the problems with being a baby bird is that almost everything with teeth wants to eat you, and if you can't fly, there's not much you can do about it. We learned that picking the baby up and putting him back in the nest wouldn't work, so we were forced to just watch his timid movements around the yard and whisper to

him, "I'm sorry, pal." You might think that the older we get, the tougher our shells become to these little natural tragedies, but it doesn't seem to work that way. Maybe it's because we've now had children of our own, and grandchildren, too. Maybe that's why it actually hurts more to see a helpless baby bird today than when we were 11 and riding our bikes on the river trails. Back then we were bulletproof, flexible, and immortal. But we learned things over the years. We saw people our age die. We saw younger people die. We accumulated our own little collection of personal tragedies.

Then the baby found the drain spout.



Slim Randles

Yep, that little rascal hopped into the drain spout coming off the roof and had sense enough to stay in there, coming to the edge of his "cave" only for meals from his anxious mother. A week later, I thought I recognized him sitting on a tree branch, looking smug. He

wasn't in the drain spout and I didn't see any feathers around on the ground. We live in an age of small miracles.

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