

I've found an injured Hawk! What do I do?

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Jamaica is home to a number of birds of prey, also called raptors – the predators of the bird world, which feed on other animals such as rats, lizards, other birds and in some cases much larger prey. These include the small Sparrow Hawk, the much larger Red-tailed Hawk, the Barn Owl and the Jamaican Screech Owl. They are an important part of our ecosystem and their predatory behaviour helps keep populations of their prey species under control.

Sometimes these birds get ill or injured and are found by members of the public. What should be done?

First of all, the bird should not be harmed! They play an important role in nature and should be helped if possible. It is important to call the National Environment & Planning Agency (NEPA) which bears responsibility for wildlife protection. They will send a field officer to collect the bird.

Care must be exercised in trying to catch the bird as their claws (talons) and beaks can inflict painful injuries, so only try to capture the bird if you must. If you are not comfortable with the risk of catching the bird, leave it alone and wait for help. Use a thick towel to cover the head and then control the talons or wear thick protective work

gloves. Place the bird in a cage or box with holes punched in it. For owls especially, keep them in a darkened place where they will be more comfortable.

If help is not immediately available, they can be fed strips of chicken meat or even tinned cat food.

Once the bird is collected, it is usually taken to a vet for examination. Those that can be helped will be treated and probably taken to the Hope Zoo for rehabilitation. Those that are badly injured may have to be put to sleep. Those that recover well may eventually be released in their original environment.