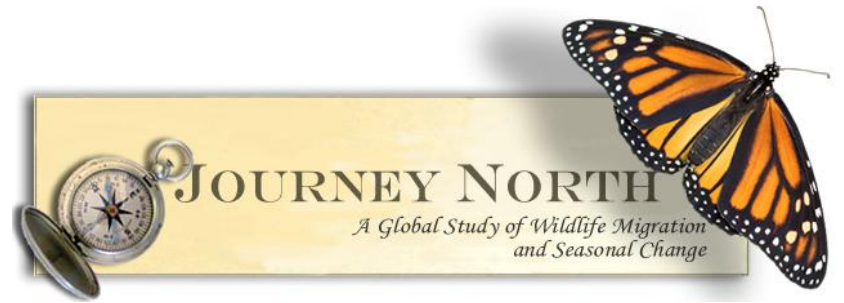




© 2012 Journey North
<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/>



Leaving the Nest: Summer School for Fledglings



Image: Vickie King

By Jane Duden



Taking the Leap

One by one, baby robins jump from their nest. Each clumsy baby flaps and flutters its way to the ground. At last the baby has space to move. Running and flapping builds leg and wing strength. Baby can take short flights in just a few days. Its tail is still too short to be much help, but the feathers grow fast.



Leaving the Nest

Baby robins are ready to leave the nest when they are about 13 days old. Within 24 hours the nest will be empty. What might you see if you were watching? What does a fledgling need to learn? Summer is school time for baby robins!



Hiding in the Grass

At first, fledglings hide as much as they can because they are defenseless. Speckling helps hide them. They are a bit safer as they build up strength and agility.

Testing Their Wings

Baby robins can't fly well when they leave the nest. They must build up muscles and grow adult feathers to be strong fliers. Beginners need practice! As flying improves, they follow their parents. At night, Dad leads them to a roost tree with other dads and babies. The young robins learn how to be in a flock.





Image: Randy Indish

Depending on Others

Once babies fledge, both parents still feed them for a few days. Mom soon leaves to lay a new clutch of eggs. The fledglings will need to learn from other robins when Dad leaves to help with new nestlings.

Learning Robin-Speak

Robins have their own special vocalizations. Fledglings listen and imitate to learn their language. They also learn when to sing, and when to be silent. Being exposed to the proper calls teaches them how to communicate with other robins. Robins depend on their voices to locate friends, establish territory borders and warn of enemies.

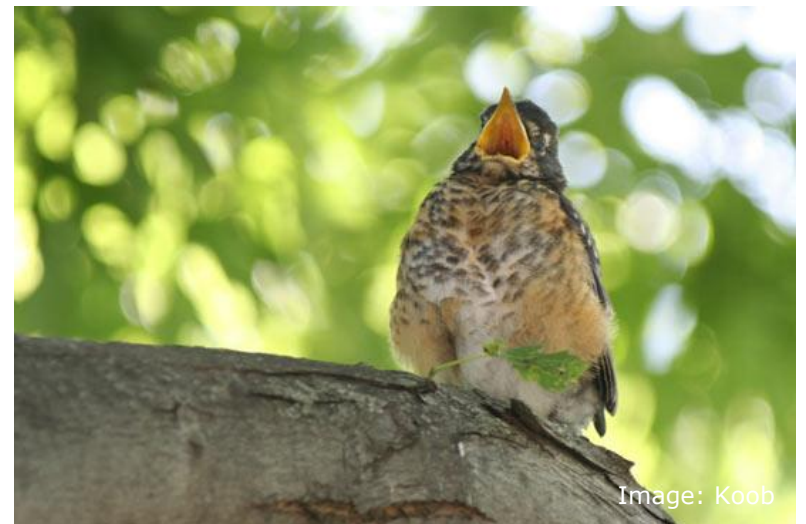


Image: Koob



Image: Laura Erickson

Recognizing Danger

Fledglings face many perils. Crows, Blue Jays, snakes, chipmunks, cats, and squirrels are some of their predators. The young bird looks and listens, learning to recognize danger. We can help by keeping our cats indoors.

Finding the Right Foods

In late summer, fruits and berries get ripe and plentiful. If Dad brings the babies to the cherry tree, he will feed them at first. They watch him. They watch other birds that come to the cherry tree. They see how to feed on cherries.



Image: Koob



Image: Laura Erickson

Exploring the Menu

Robins eat a variety of foods. Fledglings must learn many things before they can feed themselves:

- *How can I get worms in summer?*
- *Where do I find insects to eat?*
- *How can I get blueberries, crabapples, buckthorn berries?*
- *How can I get those fruits that grow on delicate twigs just out of reach*

Feeding Themselves

Young robins discover ways to find food. They look for cherries that have fallen on the ground. They may follow another robin and try to steal its food!



Image: Laura Erickson



Robin is Ready

Fledglings are strong, independent birds just 12-15 days after leaving the nest. By summer's end, most juveniles look like adults. During this time, they are living and flying with a flock. They'll keep learning from the experienced adults in the flock. Fall, migration and winter are ahead.

Off to New Places

Fall is coming. The flock grows restless. The birds fly and feast, traveling farther and farther away. Thanks to summer school, young robin is ready!

