



Mallard Duck Courtyard Release Help

Sophia DiPietro, Wildlife Biologist

If you can walk Mom inside to get her back outside...

1. It's preferable to walk Mom out of the courtyard with her young. Can you open access into the building and guide them to the outside doors through a hallway? If so, visually block all other access points *besides* the courtyard doors and the other exit point. Adjacent hallways can have sheets hung or other barriers placed. Visual barriers are ideal even if they're not fully secure.
2. Someone should walk slowly behind Mom and ducklings. There should be no one in front of the birds. Provide enough space so that ducklings do not scramble while being close enough to continue ducklings and Mom to proceed.
3. Once they reach outside, your job is done. Mom knows exactly where she wants to take her babies. You cannot control her, or her flock, but instead once she chooses her direction you can attempt to slow traffic.

What if Mom gets spooked during this process and babies are left in the hallway and they aren't near the exit? This is why your courtyard door should remain open. Simply guide them back into that area and close the door and give Mom time to return. She will return to the courtyard.

If you cannot walk Mom inside to get her back outside...

1. You must trap Mom FIRST.
2. Slowly approach and get her into a corner. Typically she will be huddling with her babies. You can take a LARGE carrier and with the door open keep creeping it closer and closer to her and try to get her to enter.
3. If babies enter along with Mom they could be crushed or injured unless you use a large carrier! And babies CAN escape through the cage doors of standard carriers or through crate bars. You need to modify carriers with screen over the door if you are using a cat or dog carrier. Alternatively you can use a sturdy box on its side for mom, or a plastic tote with lid.
4. It is ideal to NOT capture Mom with babies in the same carrier to avoid any potential crushing risks.
5. Use the corners of the building to slowly capture ducklings when trapped up against walls, or corners. They should never be chased. Slow and low is key.
6. Once all family members are captured, release all at the same time outside. We don't recommend taking to a new location but if you need to walk across a street to a safer adjacent lawn, that is fine. But Mom knows what water source she wants to go to and it can be MILES away from your location.

Releasing babies that are trapped in courtyards asap are essential. They should not be kept in the courtyard for days or weeks, irrespective if you're providing food. These types of food are not adequate for wild birds and babies will begin to decline or get predated upon.