



## 12TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

CORNELL LAB of  
ORNITHOLOGY

Audubon

## Making Your Windows Safe for Birds

You hear a loud thud at your living room window. Looking up, you see a few tiny feathers stuck to the glass. Others drift slowly to the ground. One more bird has been struck down in a collision with a plate-glass window.

Bird-window crashes are an all-too-common phenomenon. These collisions usually involve small birds, such as finches, that fall unnoticed to the ground. Sometimes the birds are merely stunned and recover in a few moments. Often, however, they die. The number of birds killed by collisions with windows is staggering—estimates range as high as 100 million per year.

Does this mean that you should stop feeding birds? Not at all. It means that if you notice birds striking your windows, you should take steps to eliminate the problem.

### Some Solutions

- Move feeders to new locations. Usually bird strikes occur at just one or two windows. Moving feeders away from them may solve the problem entirely.
- Place feeders closer to the glass. If a feeder is just a foot or two from a window, panicked birds may still fly into it, but probably won't have enough momentum to injure themselves.
- Alter the windows' appearance. If you don't want to move your feeders, or if relocating them doesn't solve your problem, you'll need to alter the appearance of the offending windows. But to do this, you'll need to figure out why the collisions are occurring. Are birds confused because the window is reflecting the landscape behind it? Is the glass so transparent they think it isn't there? To find out, you'll need to get a bird's-eye view.

### See-Through Glass

Go to your feeder and look at your window. Can you see through it? If so, the birds can, too. Is there a plant inside the house that might be attractive to birds? If so, try moving it. Is there another window on the opposite side of the house, creating the illusion of a fly-through passage? Try making your windows less transparent by changing the lighting inside the house—pull a shade or open or close a door.

You can also make glass less transparent by taping paper to the inside of the panes. This is unsightly, but it's a good temporary measure until you can find a better solution. Commercially available hawk silhouettes are effective at deterring window strikes, as long as you use several. They work not because they look like hawks, but because they break up the window's appearance. Another solution is to put up a commercially available decal that is a replica stabilimentum or white zig-zag from the center of an orbital spider's

web. It is thought that spiders create the highly visible zig-zag so birds and large insects will avoid flying into and destroying their webs. Note: Do not attach objects directly to thermopane windows without consulting the manufacturer.

### Reflective Windows

Windows that mirror the outside habitat present a different problem. If you see branches or sky reflected in the glass when you look at your windows, you'll understand why the birds are confused. Changing the lighting inside the house or fastening objects to the inside of the glass won't help.

Instead, you'll need to alter the window's appearance by placing something on the outside. As a temporary measure, you can rub a bar of soap on the window (the streaks can be easily removed).

Other solutions include attaching strips of paper or cardboard to the window, hanging ribbons, streamers, colored string, festive garlands, or even mobiles in front of it.

### Screens and Netting

Another solution is to place some kind of screen or netting over the window. This won't obstruct the view; birds will continue to fly into the window. They should bounce off relatively unharmed. Fruit-tree netting, pulled tightly over a window should reduce or eliminate injured birds.

### Treating Dazed Birds

Birds don't always die when they strike windows. Sometimes they fly away, apparently unharmed; other times they fall to the ground, stunned. If you find a dazed bird, take it inside where predators can't reach it and place it in a dark container such as a shoebox. The darkness will keep the bird quiet while it revives, which should occur within a few minutes unless it is seriously injured. Release the bird as soon as it appears awake and alert.

You might not always see or hear birds striking your windows. Check the ground below your windows periodically. If you find dead birds, move your feeders or modify the windows. Birds face plenty of natural dangers. Let's not subject them to unnatural ones.

