

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

One of our son's childhood books was a collection of poetry entitled "Bird Watch" by poet Jane Yolen with beautiful watercolor illustrations by Ted Lewin. A favorite poem was "First Robin": As puffed up - as a tag-team wrestler - he hops around the arena of our lawn- Finding a worm, - he slips a half-nelson - on its slim wriggle. – One pull, two, three, - and the worm is up, - then down for the count, - down his winning throat. – He bobs his head - for my applause, - then looks for another worm, - another arena, - before the game is over, - before the crowds – have moved on."

As all of us, we love the return of the birds. There is the joy of seeing the first robin and the return of the loons and geese. It is also a time of concern for their safety. We have some big windows and in the spring I put up circular plastic strips to act as a warning to the birds "This is not a clear passage way!" The strips work

For birds, glass windows are worse than invisible. By reflecting foliage or sky, they look like inviting places to fly into. And because the sheer number of windows is so great, their toll on birds is huge.

The good news is that **you can greatly reduce the danger** your home's windows pose to birds with some simple remedies, according to Christine Sheppard, who directs the Bird Collisions Program of the [American Bird Conservancy](#). The group offers [extensive information on preventing collisions](#) on its website. The [Fatal Light Awareness Program](#) also offers great information on preventing bird collisions.

What happens to birds that hit windows? Sadly, the bird often dies, even when it is only temporarily stunned and manages to fly away. Many times these birds die later from internal bleeding or bruising, especially on the brain. Daniel Klem of Muhlenberg College has researched this issue since the 1970s. He writes, "Glass is an indiscriminate killer that takes the fit as well as the unfit of a species' population."

There are two main types of window collisions: daytime and nighttime. In daylight, birds crash into windows **because they see reflections of vegetation** or see through the glass to potted plants or vegetation on the other side. At night, nocturnal migrants (including most songbirds) crash **because they fly into lighted windows**. Some of these nighttime collisions are due to chance, but much more often the nocturnal migrants are lured to their deaths by the lights. For reasons not entirely understood, lights divert nocturnal migrants from their original path, especially in low-ceiling or foggy conditions. In the lighted area, they mill about, sometimes colliding with one another or the lighted structure. The [Fatal Light Awareness Program](#), based in Toronto, Canada, has much more about this problem.

There's one additional reason: birds sometimes see their reflection in a window and attack it. This happens most frequently in the spring when territoriality is high. Although it can be annoying to the homeowner, it's seldom a threat to the bird's survival. Most of the remedies suggested below for window strikes will also help solve the problem of a bird attacking its reflection.

How To Safeguard Your Windows For Birds

Start by identifying dangerous windows, including large picture windows, paired windows at right angles to each other, or windows with feeders outside. Go outside and look at your windows from a bird's point of view. If you see branches or sky reflected in or visible through the glass, that's what the birds will see, too. Past recommendations about safe distances for feeders outside windows are no longer thought to be valid, Sheppard says. "If you've got windows near a bird feeder, you should make them bird friendly and don't worry about how far away they are."

Try some of the following ideas to make your windows safer. To deter small birds, vertical markings on windows need to be spaced no more than 4 inches apart and horizontal markings no more than 2 inches apart across the entire window. (If hummingbirds are a problem, the spacing should be reduced to a 2-inch by 2-inch grid.) All marking techniques should be applied to the outside of the window.

- **Decals.** Put decals, stickers, sun catchers, mylar strips, masking tape, or other objects (even sticky notes) on the outside surface of the window. These are only effective when spaced very closely (see above). **Note that hawk silhouettes do little to deter birds.** Remember: placing just one or two window stickers on a large window is not going to prevent collisions—they must cover most of the glass with the spaces between too narrow for birds to fly through.
- **ABC BirdTape.** This long-lasting tape offers an easier way to apply the correct spacing of dots across your window.
- **Acopian Bird Savers.** Also known as “zen curtains,” these closely spaced ropes hang down over windows. They do the work of tape or decals but are easier to install and can be aesthetically pleasing. You can order them to fit your windows or make your own.
- **Screens.** Installing mosquito screens over your windows is very effective, as long as they are on the outside of the window and cover the entire surface.
- **Netting.** Cover the glass on the outside with netting at least 3 inches from the glass, taut enough to bounce birds off before they hit. Small-mesh netting (around 5/8” or 1.6 cm) is best, so that birds don’t get their heads or bodies entangled but will bounce off unharmed. You can mount the netting on a frame, such as a storm-window frame, for easy installation and removal.
- **One-way transparent film.** Products such as Collidescape permit people on the inside to see out, but makes the window appear opaque on the outside. They can reduce the amount of light that comes in your window (this can also reduce your cooling costs), according to Sheppard.

It is easy to alert the birds of danger and you can continue to enjoy them throughout the spring, summer and fall.

Dates to Save: May 28 – Start Summer with a Sizzle – Dining for Cats and Dogs – Lynn’s Custom Meats and Catering 10:30 to 3 p.m. sponsored by Armstrong Insurance and OCSA.

June 3 – Purple Cat Van - Free Spay and Neuter clinic for cats – owned or feral. Contact Lisa Lew to schedule an appointment – 715-634-5394 Sponsored by OCSA and Angela Madelon.

September 12 – NHS Dog Walk.