

A bird hit my window! *What should I do?*

A Guide for Ontario Renters & Homeowners

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Windows are a widespread hazard for migratory & resident birds

- Collisions with windows kill **around** 25 million birds every year in Canada.
- On average, structures with glass windows each kill between 2-10 birds per year.
- 90% of bird collisions happen at homes, at or below the height of surrounding trees.
- **There are simple solutions to stop bird collisions**

Sections of this document:

1. ***How to help a bird that hit a window and is injured/stunned***
2. ***What to do with a dead bird***
3. ***Solutions for bird-friendly/bird-safe windows***

Note: This guide is not applicable to cases of the same bird(s) hitting a window repeatedly. There are separate causes and solutions that you can read about [here](#).

Report a bird collision to authorities as a citizen scientist

- Report any window strike victims (dead or alive) to **BirdMapper.org/app** using a browser or mobile device. Include a photo of the bird and details of when/where it was found.
- Any dead Ontario **Bird Species at Risk (SAR)** should be reported to the **Ministry of Natural Resources**. For information about handling SAR see the provincial **manual**.

1. How to help a bird that hit a window and is injured/stunned

- **First confirm if the bird actually needs help by reviewing [these guidelines](#).**
 - **If you find a fledgling (baby) bird, [click here](#) for more information about what to do.**
- A. Try to restrain the bird immediately. Place it inside a small container (e.g., unwaxed paper bag or cardboard box) and move the container to a dark, quiet, warm space.
 - B. Contact your local wildlife rescue (see list below) as soon as possible and arrange for the bird to be transported to their facility.
 - C. Birds are often in shock after colliding with a solid surface. If step B is not possible, allow the bird time to recover inside the container (1-2 hours). **Do not attempt to feed or provide water to the bird.** Later, try to release the bird in suitable habitat away from the window.
 - D. If you are not able to complete steps A, B or C, you can move the bird to a sheltered outdoor space (e.g., under a shrub) to minimize risk of predation or trampling.

More information:

- **List** of authorized wildlife care/rescue/rehabilitation centres in Ontario.
- **Map** of Ontario wildlife centres that handle birds.
- **Step-by-step care instructions** for a bird that hit a window.

2. What to do with a dead bird

- In general, birds should be buried or left in place.
- If the bird appears diseased you may report it to the **Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative**.
- **Canada's Migratory Bird Convention Act (1994)** forbids long-term possession of any migratory birds (dead or alive) but allows for temporary possession during the process of delivering a bird to authorities.
- Ontario has **rules about keeping dead wildlife**. For birds of prey like hawks and owls, you must register that you have a dead wild animal in order to keep it for long term.

3. Solutions for bird-friendly/bird-safe windows

Why do birds hit windows?

- Birds do not see glass and do not understand reflections. Birds try to fly through transparent glass or towards reflections they interpret as an extension of their habitat.
- Every glass window outdoors poses some amount of risk to birds.
- High-risk windows tend to be near green spaces (bird habitat) and bird feeders.
- Collisions peak during spring and fall bird migration, but also happen year-round.

How to prevent bird collisions:

- Create the impression of a visible barrier that birds cannot fly through.
- Existing home windows can be retrofitted using simple do-it-yourself (DIY) materials.
- You must access and modify the OUTSIDE of the window. Solutions applied on the inside of the glass will not dampen the reflection and could be less effective.
- Get creative! There are many possible ways to make windows safer for birds.

Examples of DIY solutions for preventing bird-window collisions (must meet criteria below)

- **Feather Friendly DIY tape** – made in Ontario!
- **Tempera paint** – available at most art supply & craft stores.
- **Tempera** or **oil-based** markers, **tape**, stickers.
- **Acopian Bird Savers** – hang string/cord curtain from above window spaced 2 inches apart.
- Netting or screens.

For more DIY ideas check out:

- **Homes Safe for Birds** from FLAP Canada.
- **DIY Guide** from American Bird Conservancy.
- **Bird-smart glass** products such as window film and glazing tested and endorsed by American Bird Conservancy.

IMPORTANT

To effectively prevent collisions, window retrofits using visual markers must meet 4 criteria:

- **MARKER DENSITY AND COVERAGE** Separate visual markers by spaces no more than 10 cm (4 inches) apart vertically or 5 cm (2 inches) horizontally that cover the entire window. To keep smaller birds like hummingbirds, creepers and kinglets safe, windows should not have reflective openings larger than 5 x 5 cm (2 x 2 in).
- **MARKER SURFACE** Apply visual markers to **exterior** surface (i.e. first surface) of glass to disrupt the illusion of a safe, natural environment reflected in the glass.
- **MARKER CONTRAST** Make markers stand out in contrast to transparent or reflective exterior surfaces, such as windows or marble walls, and under varying weather conditions.
- **MARKER SIZE** A visual marker should be no less than .32 cm (1/8 in).

Source: Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP)

The following are NOT EFFECTIVE for preventing bird collisions:

- Single markers like silhouettes/cut-outs of birds and other shapes.
- Indoor blinds or curtains – *these do not reduce the reflection on the outer glass.*
- Leaving windows dirty – *although this might reduce risk, it is not preventative.*
- Decoy owls.
- Collision-deterrent products designed with ultraviolet (UV) – *Although birds do see UV, there is no scientific evidence that these products effectively prevent bird collisions.*