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

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 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.

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.