

Bird Collision Content Guidelines

Raising awareness of bird-window collisions and bird friendly building design

Provided by Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) Canada – brendon@flap.org

Bird-window collisions are a subject of several common misconceptions held by the general public. Many people lack familiarity with key concepts that are related to preventing bird-window collisions and advocating for bird friendly building design policies.



Photo: Kaitlin Brough

As we, various stakeholder groups concerned with conserving birds, develop communications and strategies for outreach, it is important that our collective public education efforts 1) take advantage of opportunities to describe and demonstrate what bird friendly building design is all about, 2) address misinformation and previous misunderstandings by the public, and 3) be sensitive to the serious nature of the subject matter.

This document provides suggestions for designing social media and other digital content related to solutions for preventing bird-window collisions.

Common public misconceptions about bird-window collisions and methods for prevention:

- Most bird-window collisions are caused by light pollution / artificial light at night. Turning off lights is the best method to prevent bird-window collisions.
Actually, while some collisions occur at night, most bird-window collisions happen during the daytime because birds fail to see glass or understand reflections on glass. Light pollution is harmful for birds, humans and ecosystems for a host of other reasons and can be reduced by turning lights off.
- Most bird-window collisions happen high up at tall buildings.
Actually, over 90% of bird-window collisions happen at residential and low-rise buildings. Most bird-window collisions happen at windows that are positioned at or below the height of surrounding tree canopy (i.e., floors 1-4 in much of North America; tree canopy height may vary elsewhere).
- Birds crash into glass because they are stupid.
Actually, humans and other animals also crash into glass because we fail to see it. Most wild animals do not have a concept of reflections on windows because reflections do not exist in nature and were only recently put there by humans.
- Wind turbines kill a lot of birds and should be addressed before windows.
Actually, wind turbines kill a relatively small amount of birds compared to windows and predation by cats.
- Bird-window collisions can be prevented using ultraviolet decals or liquid ink.
Actually, ultraviolet decals and ink aren't recommended because they require regular replacement, 5 x 5 cm spacing and don't perform well under variable lighting conditions.
- Bird-window collisions can be prevented with individual birds of prey stickers or cutouts, CD disks, paper or ribbons
Actually, all window treatments must meet proven specifications in order to be effective. Applying a few bird of prey stickers or cutouts will have little if no effect at reducing collisions. ([source](#))

- Bird-window collisions can be prevented by closing interior curtains or blinds.
Actually, anything you put on the interior of the window (i.e., indoors) won't eliminate reflections on the outside surface of glass. Treatments should be applied on the exterior of the window.
- Current advocacy efforts aim to stop constructing or get rid of buildings altogether.
Actually, we are not suggesting that we stop construction of buildings, only that new buildings should use proven methods to prevent bird deaths.
- Most birds that collide with windows fly away and are therefore fine.
Actually, many birds that hit windows suffer internal injuries that take time to manifest. Birds that fly away may later succumb to these injuries.
- Bird friendly design is about changing the glazing on windows.
Actually, this is partly true, but treating (retrofitting) windows on existing buildings is more about adding visual markers on the glass, so that it contrasts with the reflective glazing. New buildings can use glass with glazing that is less reflective and/or has markers built-in.
- The solution to preventing bird-window collisions is to get rid of windows.
Actually, bird friendly building design standards and guidelines recommend window size and total surface coverage with glass should be reduced, not that windows should be eliminated.
- Bird-window collisions only happen at big windows.
Actually, the risk of collisions is positively correlated with the size of windows, but collisions can still happen often at small windows, especially where there are reflections of nearby habitat.
- Birds will crash into windows repeatedly and appear fine, so what's the problem?
Actually, birds may attack their reflection on a window for different reasons (i.e., defending territory). This is a separate problem from bird-window collisions with different solutions, and requires the reflection to be muted, not broken up by visual markers.

Visual Media Suggestions

The following are suggestions of images to avoid using in promotional materials:

- Exclusively showing pictures of tall buildings / skyscrapers. Instead, emphasize residential home windows as well as transparent railing systems.
- Pictures showing windows treated with birds of prey decals, ultraviolet window markers, or other window treatments that do not follow 5cm x 5cm spacing (UNLESS you are explaining why these methods are not effective, and also include an example of what is effective);
- Bird feeders or baths positioned at an unsafe distance from windows (i.e., within 1.5 ft - 10 meters)
- Media that make window collisions seem funny, light-hearted, or a joke;
- Pictures that show graphic close ups of dead birds, especially birds that are decomposed or damaged. Photos of layouts of dead birds such as those produced by FLAP Canada, and photos of birds that are completely intact, are permissible, but please provide image credit.



The following are suggestions of images to include and emphasize in promotional materials:

- Pictures of bird friendly building windows, i.e., glass treated with appropriately-spaced visual markers, or windows with external fixtures such as curtains of string, or custom glass with markers built in;
- Example images are available at the websites listed below:

[Stop Birds from Hitting Windows at Your Home or Cottage - FLAP Canada](#)

[Small-scale solutions – Safe Wings Ottawa](#)

[Bird Friendly Building Gallery - American Bird Conservancy](#)

- Bird feeders or bird baths positioned within 1.5 feet of windows;
- Pictures showing reflections of trees or other habitat on glass;
- Bird species that are native to North America, or wherever communications are applicable;
- Graphs or other representations of data showing the total number of birds killed by human causes (e.g., collisions with windows, predation by cats, wind turbines).



Need more info?

Visit flap.org