

## Simple Ways to Save Birds' Lives



Every spring, millions of migrating songbirds leave their wintering grounds and fly north to establish territories, breed, and raise their young. We welcome their cheerful, busy presence in our yards while realizing that safe arrivals are not guaranteed.

Different bird species may fly up to thousands of miles to reach their destinations. The total spring migration period along the New England flyway takes place over two months from April 1 to the end of May. Fall migration is more prolonged, lasting from mid-August through mid-November. In either case, each bird must complete its journey in a matter of days.

Bird migrations occur primarily at night when winds are calm and the light of the moon and stars, in conjunction with a deeply embedded instinctual compass, aids in navigation. Until modern times, the primary hazards were storms and predators. With the invention of electricity and its use to illuminate buildings, window strikes present a huge new danger.

“Light pollution in general is problematic,” says Meredith Barges, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year student at Yale Divinity School and policy researcher for the Yale Bird-Friendly Building Initiative.

“Birds take off at sunset and fly throughout the night,” Ms. Barges explains. “Younger birds, especially first-year fall migrants, may become confused and disoriented by artificial light from far below. They’ll fly off track. When starting out, birds are strong and able to keep going for several hours. But by 11 pm, they may tire and be lured by the lights to descend and rest. This is when the most casualties occur as they fly blindly into night-lit office building windows.”

Ms. Barges, along with many others, has worked hard to promote the “Lights Out CT” bill (HB #6607) that successfully passed the House of Representatives in March. It cites that during periods of peak bird migration from March 15 to May 31 and from August 15 to November 15, non-essential outdoor lighting at state-owned or state-leased buildings should be turned off from 11 pm to 6 am. If voted into law, this bill will not only save millions of dollars in the cost of electricity, it will spare thousands of migrating birds from an untimely death. Readers are urged to ask their representatives to support HB#6607.

For homeowners, it is recommended that during migration periods, nonessential inside lighting be diminished by drawing curtains or shades in lighted rooms. Outdoor fixtures should cast light down but not up, and bulbs that have a 2100-2200 lumen rating and yellow light are preferable. Where possible, use motion sensors on outdoor lights and avoid the use of ornamental lighting.

## **Window treatments to prevent bird casualties**

Nonmigrating birds flying during the day are also at risk; we've all heard the sickening "thunk" when a bird collides with one of our windows. All too often the bird will die instantly. Sometimes it may remain still for a while and then fly off, to our immense relief. But even then, window strike victims often die soon thereafter from brain trauma or predation. Many times their beaks are broken and they die of starvation.

Dr. Daniel Klem Jr., author of *Solid Air: Invisible Killer - Saving Billions of Birds from Windows* (Hancock House, 2021), estimates that between 100 million and one billion birds in the US die each year this way. Birds can't see the difference between open air and clear glass. Reflections of trees or even the presence of plants inside the structure add to the birds' confusion.

From houses to skyscrapers, all buildings with windows or mirrored cladding pose this threat. Dr. Klem outlines several techniques to help prevent these senseless deaths. Below are some tips for homeowners.

External window screens are terrific. However, if your screens are on the inside of your windows, they won't help. In this case the outside of the window should be covered with markings, no more than 2" apart in horizontal rows, or 4" apart in vertical rows. You can also use cord or ribbons hanging vertically 4" apart, or get creative with tempera paint.

One of the least visually obtrusive solutions is a product made by Feather Friendly which consists of a narrow tape that you apply to the window and then lift off, leaving tiny squares in a grid pattern. It doesn't obstruct the view and is actually quite attractive.

<https://www.featherfriendly.com/residential>

Depending on the solar orientation of your windows and other factors, some may not need treatment; concentrate on the ones that get the most strikes. Feel free to contact POP for more information—or see many helpful articles online, particularly those posted by the National Audubon Society, All About Birds, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For more products and DIY ideas, visit the American Bird Conservancy website <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>