

How Safe is Your Place for Birds?

Teacher's Sheet

grades 3-5 & 6-8



Overview: Students investigate glass windows and/or doors to check for visual cues that might help birds avoid collisions. The cutout birds are sized slightly larger than the 2x4 template to represent the actual size of a small, *neo-tropical migrant*, such as a warbler.

Using the student sheet provided, have your students answer the following questions:

1. **Can you guess how many kinds of birds *migrate* from Central and South America each spring?** - Use this question to open the conversation. Answer: 200 species
2. **Why do you think they come north at this time of year?** - Answer: birds migrate to find food easier and also to increase their breeding success. When they travel north, they have abundant food, but fewer predators, and can have more babies. <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/neotropical-migratory-bird-faqs>
3. **How many birds are lost each year to collisions with glass and why?** Answer: we lose about 1 billion birds to window collisions each year because birds cannot see glass. They see either a reflection of sky or trees, or they see through to somewhere they want to go. <https://abcbirds.org/program/glass-collisions/>
4. **List some other challenges that bird face:** Answer: Finding food, water, shelter, escaping predators, finding a mate and a safe place to raise young, climate change, storms, draught, loss of habitat, industrial farming, logging, invasive species, etc. <https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/top-five-threats-birds-may-surprise-you>
5. **Which of the above challenges are natural, and how many are caused by humans?**

Independent Research – have the students look up information on birds

6. **Choose one species of *neo-tropical migrants* and find out if this bird comes to Maryland as a *stopover* along their route, or if they stay in Maryland for the season.**
7. **Does your species have a smaller or larger wingspan than 4 inches? Wingspan ____**

For this part of the activity, photocopy the bird template page onto white or color cardstock (mounting to the popsicle stick is optional). Take students to explore the school/facility and try to see the glass like a bird would.

8. **Color your template bird with some of the colors of the species you've chosen.**
9. **Using your template bird, examine 4 to 5 areas on the outside of your school that have glass. Hold up your template bird to the window/door and see if that bird can fit through an area of plain glass that doesn't have any markings a bird might see.**

Back in the classroom you can discuss the findings of your window/door examinations:

10. **Did you find any areas that are bird-safe?**
11. **What areas of the building do you think should be?**
12. **How do you think your bird would do migrating past your place?**
13. **What message would you share with someone about how we can help birds see glass?**

Neotropical Migrant – a bird that spends its summer nesting in Canada or the United States and spends the winters in Mexico, Central America, South America or the Caribbean islands.

Migration – the trip that birds take twice a year from their northern nesting area to their southern wintering area and back.

Stopover – a bird that stops during migration and spends a short time to rest, eat and drink before continuing to its destination.