

Ways to Make Windows Visible to Birds

By Pam Stewart - Arkansas Audubon Society

Recent research has shown that windows are responsible for billions of bird deaths annually. These studies take into account not only multi-story buildings, but typical one and two story homes. Unless windows are treated so that birds will avoid them, a yard planted with bird friendly trees, shrubs, and pollinator attractants may just lead birds into a death trap.

Birds don't see glass! They see reflections of sky and trees, and fly directly into the glass.

Several methods have been found to help prevent bird crashes. At our home, near the Buffalo River in Newton County Arkansas, we have used three methods which are pictured below. Photos have been taken from the outside, and then from the inside to show that while the deterrents are visible, they don't block the view. Note that the camera "sees" the reflections that the birds see, shown in the photos taken from outside.



From outside



From inside

Perhaps the cheapest do-it-yourself method is Parachute Cord Curtains. On the outside of the window a small screw was placed at each corner and middle top of the frame, and a cord strung across, attached to the screws. Cords the length of the window from top to bottom with extra for knotting were cut, and tied to the horizontal cord, so that they hung about two inches apart. Birds recognizing that their wing span is too large to fit between the strands, slow down and veer away.

The window on the left is our kitchen window as seen from the outside. On the right is the same window with the photo taken from inside. Note, the camera "sees" reflections on the outside as birds do.



From outside



From inside

Feather Friendly is one of several companies that produce a tape containing sticky dots designed to adhere to the window as the tape is removed. The process requires starting with clean windows, measuring the tape and attaching it to the window, and rubbing the dots so that they remain stuck to the glass as the tape is peeled off. The dots are visible from the outside. Looking from the inside out, they are visible without blocking the view. Visibility of the dots depends to some extent on the lighting inside and out.

Very important: Any of these methods must be applied to the **outside** of the window. Blinds and curtains inside do not prevent the reflections being visible to birds, as can be seen from the photos taken from the outside. They can block inside light, or views across a room to another window which might indicate to a bird that it could fly through to the other side.

Screened windows are protective only if the screens are obviously visible. Newer screens may be invisible.

There is now glass made commercially with various embedded designs that are nearly invisible to humans, which have been found to be effective in preventing bird collisions.