

For birds, window panes present clear danger

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Special to Wichita Falls Times Record News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Some animal species derive benefits from human infrastructure and habitat modifications, but many others are negatively affected – sometimes in great numbers.

Wildlife species able to adapt well to human disturbances and infrastructure are usually ecological generalists. But species with narrower habitat requirements or who are ecological specialists are often excluded from or harmed by these modified habitats.

Roadways, automobiles and wind turbines result in hundreds of thousands of avian fatalities on regional scales. However, there are threats to birds that, at similar or larger scales, result in greater annual avian mortality rates.

Perils for birds near homes

Every year, avian fatalities from these threats range in the millions to near 1 billion across the United States. One specific threat is often described as part of the “American dream” and is considered necessary for a comfortable existence.

If you haven’t already guessed, this great avian peril is caused by common features of homes and other buildings.

Although we might guess most avian building strikes are related to skyscrapers in urban areas, this isn’t the case. United States Fish and Wildlife Service researchers found that less than 1% of avian building strikes were skyscraper related.

Most birds are killed by collisions with low-rise buildings – four to 11 stories high, as defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – and urban and suburban residential structures and homes.

Transparency, reflectivity

The greatest causal factor for residential bird strikes is due to how we look out of our homes to see the world around us: our residence’s glass windows.

The reflective and transparent prop-

erties of clear glass panes present birds with optical illusions. Light striking window glass often reflects clouds, trees, sky and other objects within the immediate surroundings.

Glass panes may also be sufficiently transparent for birds to perceive houseplants inside a dwelling or building and, depending upon window and door placement, birds may be able to see outdoor areas completely through a home or building.

If such views are present, birds do not ascertain a barrier within their surroundings and may attempt to fly into or through the home, thus, sometimes unfortunately striking the glass windows or doors with lethal force.

Window solutions you can try

Several strategies can be employed to help bird-proof window glass and significantly reduce lethal bird strikes. If birds cannot easily perceive a clear glass pane, one of the easiest and most intuitive solutions is to make glass barriers more visible.

Applications to outside window surfaces are very effective, and one of the simplest fixes involves applying strips of tape to outside window surfaces to break up reflections across the glass pane. Some types of specialty tape accomplish this task and are perforated to preserve visibility for the home or business’s occupants.

Researchers determined that ideal placement of tape strips is 2 inches apart in horizontal directions or 4 inches apart in vertical directions. Another option is positioning tape strips in angled directions across the glass pane.

A related solution involves applying patterns of special, adhesive decals shaped as dots, squares or other geometric patterns that reflect ultraviolet light toward the birds’ eyes. Humans cannot detect ultraviolet light; however, birds easily detect the decals’ ultraviolet reflections and avoid the windows.

Additional solutions involve hanging shiny reflective tape from windows or eaves and suspending purchased or homemade paracord curtains – sometimes referred to as Zen curtains – from window frames. Window screens and netting also reduce fatal collisions.



Perforated bird tape can prevent window strikes. JIM GOETZE/TIMES RECORD NEWS

Nonreflective window surface coatings and glass with fretted patterns or designs are more expensive but highly effective in reducing bird strikes. Awnings, shutters, blinds and other architectural features help birds recognize flight barriers around homes and businesses.

Taming the light pollution

Bright lights and light pollution also disorient and confuse migrating birds. Reducing outside lighting and intensity during peak migratory periods of April through May and August through November is particularly important and decreases avian window strikes.

The Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have promoted efforts termed “Lights Out” and encourage cities, municipalities and individuals across the nation to turn off or dim outside lighting during peak avian migration periods.

Motion sensors that selectively switch outside lighting off and on are effective and help reduce costs of outside lighting. Some manufacturers produce fixtures that are DarkSky certified and significantly reduce light pollution. Fully shielded and downward-facing light bulbs help reduce nighttime light pollution levels and consequent avian confusion.

Another strategy involves placing bird feeders and water stations safer

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distances from homes and other structures. Place feeders at distances less than 3 feet and greater than 10 feet from buildings, windows and other outdoor objects.

The closer distance prevents birds from building up speed if startled from the feeders, whereas greater distances from homes and structures allow birds space and time to adjust their flight and avoid glass panes.

Curtailing feline threats

A different concern doesn’t relate to home and building structure or lights but, rather, to particular, nearby residents. These neighborhood visitors are domestic cats.

Researchers have estimated that feral and free-ranging house cats across the United States may account for 1.3 billion to 4 billion avian deaths each year. To help reduce these numbers, all family pets should be carefully supervised and, whenever possible, feral animals should be reported to animal control agencies or animal shelters.

Our homes, businesses and pets present several dangers to many birds seeking to travel through, reside or rest within urban, suburban and rural areas.

However, with proper precautions and diligence, these areas can become safer locations for our feathered residents and visitors.

Jim Goetze is a retired professor of biology and former chairperson of the Natural Sciences Department of Laredo College in Texas, with an avid interest in all aspects of the natural world.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Actor **Marion Ross** turns 98. Author **Anne Tyler**, 85. Actor **Tracy Nelson**, 63. Columnist **Bruce Feiler**, 62. Voice actor **Kevin Michael Richardson**, 62. Talk show host **Samantha Bee**, 57. Actor **Adam Goldberg**, 56. Actor **Leslie Grossman**, 55. Actor-comedian **Craig Robinson**, 55. Actor-activist **Persia White**, 50. Actor **Mehcad Brooks**, 46. Singer **Katy Perry**, 42. Singer **Ciara**, 41. Actor **Mia Wasikowska**, 37. Actor **Mia Goth**, 33. Actor **Kean Johnson**, 30.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Oct. 25.
On this date in:

1131: Louis VII was crowned King of France.

1415: English forces led by King Henry V defeated a much larger French army in the Battle of Agincourt, one of the most famous battles of the Hundred Years’ War.

1780: John Hancock, a prominent statesman and Founding Father, was elected governor of Massachusetts in a landslide.

1854: The Charge of the Light Brigade, an ill-fated military action resulting from a misunderstood order, occurred during the Crimean War as Lord Cardigan led the British cavalry against the Russians at Balaclava. About 670 cavalrymen faced heavy fire from three sides when they charged directly into a well-prepared Russian artillery battery. About 110 were killed and 161 wounded. The charge was immortalized in a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson.

1881: Pablo Picasso, cofounder of the Cubist movement and one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, was born in Malaga, Spain.

1931: The George Washington Bridge, connecting New York City and New Jersey, officially opened to traffic.

1940: Benjamin O. Davis Sr. was promoted to brigadier general, making him the first Black general in the U.S. Army.

1954: The Western European Union – a precursor to the European Community, which later evolved into the European Union – was formally established after ratification of the Paris Agreements, a significant step in the post-war in-

tegration of Europe.

1955: Austria reassumed its sovereignty with the departure of the last Allied forces. The country – occupied by the Nazis from 1938 to 1945 – had been divided into four occupation zones by the United States, Russia, Britain and France after World War II.

1961: The State of Wisconsin first required new automobiles to be equipped with front-seat safety belts, starting in 1962.

1971: The U.N. General Assembly admitted the People’s Republic of China and expelled the Republic of China (Taiwan).

1983: U.S. troops seized control of Grenada less than a week after the Caribbean island’s Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was executed in a left-wing coup. “Operation Urgent Fury” was the first major U.S. military operation since the Vietnam War.

1994: Susan Smith reported that she was carjacked in South Carolina by a Black man who took her two small children. After nine days of intense media attention, Smith confessed that the carjacking tale was false and that she had driven her Mazda into a lake to drown Michael, 3, and Alex, 1.

2002: Acclaimed actor Richard Harris, who played Professor Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the first two “Harry Potter” films, died of Hodgkin lymphoma at the age of 72, about two weeks before the U.S. premiere of “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.”

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ASK CAROLYN | CAROLYN HAX

Boyfriend doesn’t like girlfriend’s parents knowing their business

Dear Carolyn: My girlfriend and I moved in together this summer. It’s going great. However, I am having a hard time wrapping my head around how much her parents are a part of her daily life.

For a little bit of context, she is 29 and lived with them until she was 27, so she could reduce expenses while finishing grad school. I get that they are close. But there have been many occasions when we are talking about something personal and she mentions her mom’s opinion when I didn’t even know she had been talking to her about it.

I am not sure whether my perspective is reliable because I don’t have this kind of relationship with my own parents. I talk to them every few weeks and we do text occasionally, but I can’t really imagine wanting them to be part of my every decision and life update.

Would I be out of line for asking my girlfriend to examine moving toward a more typical level of communication with her parents? – *Anonymous*

Anonymous: Yes. Because who made you the keeper of “typical”?

If instead you tell her you’re not comfortable with the level of communication, then that’s something else entirely.

That would not only put you back on your side of the line, but also give your girlfriend important information about you at this point in your relationship. You want to find out as soon as possible whether you can resolve such an important philosophical and practical difference. Plus it’s always better to speak up once you know you have an issue than to let your annoyance pressure build.

You may never completely align on how much information is too much to share with your parents specifically, or with people outside the relationship in general. But you can certainly come to a functional agreement on the details you are and aren’t OK with her mom knowing – or, of course, you can decide it’s unworkable and break up.

While I agree in principle that some information is sacred, this issue touches the core of relationships, including privacy, intimacy, safety and control, among others. So I don’t see anything good coming of an effort by either of you to impose your way or your will on the other.

I’ll suggest a third option instead: not asking her to change or saying you’re un-

comfortable with her sharing, but admitting – defenses down – that you’ve had “a hard time wrapping my head around” how different your families are, particularly with communication.

And then talking about it. One conversation to start, but with the idea that it will take many.

I don’t mean for this to be disingenuous; don’t hide that you’ve been uncomfortable with how much she tells her mom. I’m just saying, treat it as a point you make, not the point you make. Because then, you leave yourself open to find out whether you have something to gain, something to learn, more to understand, from her family’s way.

Doesn’t that sound like it will get you both to a more workable, less grudging arrangement than throwing down a bar at a “more typical level of communication”? It’s the difference between asking her to zip it, and helping her understand what you consider private and why that matters to you.

Email Carolyn at tellme@washpost.com.

Kubok 16 By **Davide Coppo** Difficulty: **EASY**

30

44

31

31

49				10
29	4	9	14	
32		16	1	12
26	8			

Solution to last Sunday’s puzzle

3	4	16	14
13	10	12	15
6	8	1	7
2	11	5	9

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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