

CATS

Predation by cats is the leading cause of songbird deaths, with over 100 million deaths estimated annually in Canada alone, and some estimates place this number much higher, closer to 200 million.

A cat's instinct is to kill, even if they aren't hungry. Some people report their cats killing mice or birds and leaving them in conspicuous places. Cats will sometimes play with their prey.

The best way to keep your cat and wild birds safe is to keep your cat indoors. This is especially important during migration and breeding seasons to prevent them from killing birds. Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives than outdoor cats.

If you let your cat outside, consider the following:

- ✓ Keep your cat on a leash or harness.
- ✓ Allow them outside in an outdoor enclosure.



Cats kill many millions of songbirds each year (Photo: Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert)



The Edmonton and Area Land Trust is a conservation charity working to conserve our natural heritage for future generations. We are the only nature conservancy dedicated to preserving and restoring natural areas and rural landscapes throughout the Edmonton region for public benefit. We work to benefit wildlife and their habitat, to maintain the economic, health, and community benefits of these natural areas, and to enhance quality of life for residents and their families.

Contact us for more information:

9910—103 street
Edmonton AB T5K 2V7
(780) 483-7578
info@ealt.ca
www.ealt.ca



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HAZARDOUS HABITATS



**Creating Safe Habitat
for Wildlife in Urban
Environments**



OPEN POSTS AND VENTS

The hazards to wildlife from open vertical pipes, posts and vents are largely unknown to the public.

Birds are especially vulnerable in their fledgling stage, when they are just learning to fly. Their wings are unsteady and they often fall—and if they fall into a tall pipe, there is no escape. They aren't able to open their wings or get enough lift to fly out, and die from dehydration and starvation. Many homes have open posts and vents, such as in gates, on the roof, or on the side of the building.



American kestrel trapped in open post (top; Jeff King, Audubon Society;) nestlings in an uncovered vent (bottom; Bill Dowd, Skedaddle Humane Wildlife Control)

- ✓ Remove any unnecessary pipes or posts.
- ✓ Permanently cap those that can't be removed. Use a plastic pipe cap or metal mesh.
- ✓ Purchase a plastic or metal cap specifically designed for roof vents, which will continue to allow air flow.
- ✓ Cover your dryer vent with mesh or a plastic vent guard.
- X Vents on the roof of a house or other building are critical for air circulation. Covering these with mesh is not recommended as it can lead to build up of snow, ice, or debris.

WINDOWS

Collisions with windows kill an estimated one billion birds each year worldwide.

During the day, birds see through windows, not realizing there is an obstruction, or they may see the reflections of trees or sky and think that there is nothing in their way.



Smudge left on a window after a bird collision (Photo: Lionel Allorge)

At night, nocturnal migrating birds are lured by lights left on in high rises and other buildings. They follow their instincts to use the moon and stars to navigate at night, but can become confused by artificial lights in human environments, especially on foggy or cloudy nights.

Many window collisions are fatal, but sometimes a collision temporarily stuns a bird, and it flies away after a few moments. However, in some cases the bird ruptures an air sac or breaks a bone in the process. If you find an injured bird, contact your local wildlife rehabilitation centre.

Try these options to reduce the chance of bird collisions:

- ✓ Relocate feeders and bird baths to within 1 metre from the window, which reduces the speed birds could travel when leaving the feeder or bath, thus reducing the likelihood and severity of a collision. If you can't put your feeder or bird bath up close, place it at least 10 metres away from your windows.
- ✓ Put decals, stickers, tape, ribbon or sun catchers on windows. Some decals sold in bird food stores have components which reflect ultraviolet light, which is visible to birds, but transparent to humans. Place these about a hand-width apart over the window.
- ✓ Cover the outside of the glass with screening mounted on a frame. Make it taut enough so birds will bounce off, and about 5 cm out from the glass.
- ✓ Cover the outside of the glass with a one-way transparent film that makes the outside window appear opaque.
- ✓ When possible, keep the slats of internal blinds or external shutters closed or partially open.
- ✓ Install external sun shades or awnings.
- ✓ Install double hung windows, which have screen on the outside.
- ✓ If you work in an office building, turn your office lights off at night, and encourage your co-workers or building manager to do the same.

