

BIRD Feathers

An Activity Guide About the Songbirds of
British Columbia



Household Hazards

GRADES: K-2

SUBJECTS: Science, Art

OBJECTIVE: Students learn what they can do to help songbirds survive simple, day-to-day hazards, such as windows and cats.

METHOD: Students will make silhouettes to hang on the windows of their schools and homes to warn birds of the hazard. They will also be encouraged to actively stop their cats from hunting songbirds.

BACKGROUND

Within our homes we can find some of the most devastating hazards to songbird. Glass is one of these hazards. Glass in doors and windows often create reflections of the trees and sky. Sometimes songbirds try to fly through the glass, often killing themselves. The worst windows seem to be those that create the illusion of a way through. Large "picture" windows are particularly hazardous with their vast, unbroken surfaces of glass. So are windows on either side of the corner of a room, or large windows at each end of a room.

Preventing birds from striking your windows is as easy as making them aware that there is an obstacle in front of them. This can be done by applying something to, or hanging something on the outside of the window. Cut-out silhouettes or objects hung in front of the windows work well. In this activity, the students will make silhouettes for their windows at school and at home to break the reflection and warn birds.

Another hazard from the home is the house cat. Hunting and killing are part of the natural instincts of cats. The negative effect of house cats on the songbird population is disturbing, especially when you consider that there are over 100 000 cats in Victoria alone. However, cats are often a much loved part of a family and it is difficult to take a strong stand against your cat's natural behaviour. It is not practical to teach cats not to hunt birds. The best solution seems to be simply putting two small bells on a cat's collar. The bells will tinkle whenever the cat moves, making it very difficult for the cat to sneak up on birds. Another solution is keeping cats indoors more often. This is especially important when songbirds are roosting at night.

MATERIALS

Silhouette tracers of birds
Black and coloured paper
Scissors

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss how windows and cats are hazardous to songbirds.
2. Print out the tracers. Enlarge them further, photocopy them onto thicker paper and cut them out. Show the students how to use the tracers to cut out a silhouette of a bird. It is not necessary that the silhouettes be black. If possible the silhouettes should be laminated or cut out of weather-proof material since they will be hung on the outside of a window.
3. Hang the silhouettes on the outside of large windows around the school. Suggest the students take some home to hang on their windows.
4. Explain how students with cats can help songbirds by putting two bells on their cats' collars and keeping the cats inside at night.







