

# THE BIG BANG!

by Paul Halesworth of Wildwing

Thump! . . . Who among us has not heard that sickening noise as a bird hits a window? Window collisions kill far more birds than virtually any other danger . . . even predation by cats. Current estimates of the number of birds who die from window strikes are over 100 million! Large buildings with walls of glass are the number one problem, especially during migration, when great numbers of birds are flying at night.

Bringing the issue closer to home, what can we do individually to lessen the problem? First and foremost, **position outside feeders away from windows**. It is understandable that people enjoy watching birds on a feeder at close range, and so do birds of prey enjoy watching . . . and waiting! When a raptor rushes a feeder the prey birds panic in all directions, sometimes with disastrous results. So, position the feeder farther away, and use field glasses to watch the birds.

Another method is to **hang wind chimes or even CDs in front of a window**.

Not all windows on most houses are the problem . . . only the windows that reflect the birds' natural habitat. Reflective **Mylar streamers**—used to deter woodpeckers from drilling on houses—would be another cheap and simple way to **break up glass reflection**. One window in particular at our house is the most problematic—birds can see all the way thru the house to the front windows. **Turning the window screen around** so the screen bead is on the outside added more depth from the screen material to the window glass—creating a little more cushion when a collision does occur. Small changes can make a sizeable difference.

A decorative way to prevent window collisions are the readily available **plastic decals in the shape of bird outlines**. They adhere to glass by virtue of static cling (no adhesive), and can be re-used many times. Whispering Pines ([www.wpines.com](http://www.wpines.com)) has a decal series called **Whispering Windows**, comprised of six sets of outlines from hummingbirds to butterflies. Each set has four designs with two decals of each. Whispering Pines can also be reached at 888-882-8344.



Lastly, a more high tech solution to prevent window collisions is being researched by David Sibley, author of the Sibley Guides produced by the National Audubon Society. Sibley understood that birds can see reflected UV light, so he started testing a variety of materials on a sheet of Plexiglas. Each material was exposed to black light to assess its UV reflective qualities, if any. Almost all did not work, with the exception of olive oil . . . definitely not a good choice to apply to windows! Thinking further, day-glow colors came to mind, then fluorescent highlighters. After much experimentation, Sibley drew a 3" by 3" straight line grid pattern on the outside of a window that was being constantly hit. When dry, the highlighter lines are almost invisible to the human eye. UV light makes the pigmentation fluoresce, and is visible to birds. Window strikes were reduced dramatically! The downside to all this is that the highlighter does fade, and after a week or two needs to be reapplied. Sibley is currently researching to see if an overall UV reflective coating would make windows almost opaque to birds . . . stay tuned!

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For further information:

*David Sibley* . . . <http://www.sibleyguides.blogspot.com/> . . . ongoing window collision prevention research.

*Wisconsin Humane Society* . . . <http://www.wihumane.org>... its online store carries a number of window collision prevention products such as Whispering Windows, CollidEscape, etc.

*Fatal Light Awareness Program* . . . <http://www.flap.org> . . . an international organization dedicated to the protection of birds from reflective building exteriors.