

# WILD HOPE BUILDING FOR BIRDS: FILM SCREENING AND TAKING ACTION



## NOTES

### **AGE GROUP:**

Upper Elementary, Tweens, Teens, Adults

### **TYPE OF PROGRAM:**

Facilitated hands-on experience; Pledge cards to give away at bird-related programs

### **ACTIVITY TIME:**

45 minutes to an hour

Participants learn about bird migrations and the actions they can take to reduce the threats to birds from window strikes and light pollution. A screening of the short film “Wild Hope: Building For Birds” can launch a discussion about how to make communities safer for birds. This is a great program for collaboration with a local bird expert who can share information about local bird migrations and species.

## WHAT'S THE POINT?

- At least 40% of bird species (~4000 species!) migrate and many of them travel thousands of miles each migration season.
- In the U.S. alone, an estimated one billion birds die each year when they collide with glass. Luckily, these collisions are preventable!
- Spring migration from most of the U.S. takes place between March 1 and June 15, and fall migration runs August 15 to November 30. You can find peak migration dates in your U.S. city here: <https://birdcast.info/science-to-action/lights-out/peak-migration-dates-for-u-s-cities/>
- Know your seasonal migrations to prevent bird strikes during peak migration periods—set a calendar reminder to take action (such as marking windows with bird-safe tape or decals spaced 2-inches apart, or turning the lights off after dark). Small actions can make a big difference!

## MATERIALS:

- Laptop and projector
- Link to stream “Building for Birds”: <https://bit.ly/BuildingforBirds>
- [Pledge to Take Action card](#)
- Bird Migration Science Fact Sheet (included)
- [Feather Friendly Tape](#) and/or [Window Paint Markers](#)



## PREPARATION:

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- Queue up the “[Building for Birds](https://bit.ly/BuildingforBirds)” (<https://bit.ly/BuildingforBirds>) episode from HHMI’s Tangled Bank Studios’ Wild Hope series on a computer and connect it to a projector that has audio/visual access for screening.
- Set the room up with tables and chairs so that groups of participants can sit together for group discussions and can also view the projector screen.
- Print out the *Pledge to Take Action* cards on cardstock. Each family needs one card.
- Print several copies of the Bird Migration Science Fact Sheet (located at the end of the facilitation guide) for participants to reference.
- Consider setting up a few of the stations from the [Should I Stay or Should I Go](#) activity for families to explore on their own before or after the program.

## LIBRARY PROGRAM

### WARM UP ACTIVITY: THINKING LIKE A BIRD (10 MINUTES)

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- Take participants on a brief tour walking around the perimeter of your library.
- As you walk, instruct participants to observe their surroundings, not like a person, but like a bird – especially one that’s not familiar with the area. Where might they stop for a rest? Where might they find food?
  - Remind your group that we’re not thinking about birds that are building nests, we’re just thinking about visitors – and in fact, many birds we see every season are just visitors who don’t live here year-round.
- Ask participants to identify things that help birds: native plants and trees, water sources, and safe areas to rest.
- Then, identify things that might be confusing or dangerous: introduced plants, pollution and waste, and especially reflections in windows.
- If you make it around the whole perimeter without anyone mentioning windows, reveal to your group that window collisions are actually a huge threat to visiting birds – but luckily, it’s a very solvable problem!

*Accessibility Note: If it’s not easy to get outside due to weather or group size, guide visitors to the largest windows inside the library and ask them to observe as much as they can from inside.*

## HOW AND WHY DO BIRDS MIGRATE? GROUP DISCUSSIONS (10 MINUTES)

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- Invite the participants to take a seat at the tables. Ask them to discuss with their table group the following discussion prompts:
  - Why do birds migrate?
  - Share some common migratory birds that come through your neighborhood in the spring and fall (you can refer to your regional Bird ID card).
  - How do birds know when and where to migrate?
- After 5 minutes (or when the conversations begin winding down), invite participants to share out to the larger group.

*Facilitation Note: The Bird Migration Science Fact Sheet at the end of the Facilitation Guide has answers to these discussion questions. Consider printing copies ahead of time to share at each table.*

## BUILDING FOR BIRDS: FILM SCREENING (16 MINUTES)

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- Produced by HHMI Tangled Bank Studios, this documentary highlights the deadly impact of glass windows on bird populations and showcases innovative solutions being implemented by organizations like the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute in Washington, D.C. and the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City as well as simple ways you can make your windows "bird safe" at home.

## FINAL DISCUSSION AND PLEDGE TO TAKE ACTION (15 MINUTES)

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- Invite participants to discuss the following prompts:
  - What surprised you about the film?
  - The documentary suggests simple solutions like window paint, decals, or even markings made with temporary soap. What are the barriers that might prevent widespread adoption of these techniques?
  - What are some ways we can make our community safer for birds?
  - *For younger audiences (12 and under) consider framing the questions to be more kid-friendly:*
    - If you were a bird flying through your neighborhood, what might be dangerous for you? Can you think of ways to help make your home or school (or the library!) safer for birds?
    - Imagine you're building a house that is really safe for birds. What would it look like? How would you help birds see the windows?

- Give everyone a [Pledge to Take Action card](#) to take home. Explain, “Bird strikes are a huge threat facing migratory birds, but there are so many things we can all do to make their journey safer. Keep this card as a reminder to take action to build a better world for birds.”

## EXTENSIONS:

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- After the film, work together to make one of the library’s windows “bird safe” by applying [Feather Friendly Tape](#) or marking it with [Window Paint Markers](#) every 2 inches on the outside of the glass.
- Screen HHMI Tangled Bank Studio’s “[Wild Hope: Puffin Patrol](https://www.wildhope.tv/episode/puffling-patrol/)” (<https://www.wildhope.tv/episode/puffling-patrol/>) as a second film to learn more about how light pollution impacts bird migration.
- Consider setting up a few of the stations from the [Should I Stay or Should I Go](#) activity for families to explore on their own before or after the program.

# BIRD MIGRATION SCIENCE FACTSHEET

## WHY DO BIRDS MIGRATE?

- Just like humans, birds need basic things like food, water, and shelter.
- Birds migrate to find more of these resources in different places at different times of the year.
- In spring, birds will fly north to raise young where energy-rich insects and other foods are more abundant.
- In the fall, when cold weather makes food more scarce in the north, they will head south to warmer climates.

## HOW DO BIRDS KNOW WHEN TO MIGRATE?

- For many migratory birds, the urge to migrate is in their DNA! They have a kind of built-in alarm clock that tells them when to move on each year. They also tune into cues from nature, like changes in daylight hours, temperature, and food availability.

## HOW DO BIRDS KNOW WHERE TO MIGRATE?

- Just as birds inherit a sense of when to migrate, they also inherit a sense of where to migrate. When fledglings fly south for the first time, they know roughly which direction and how far to go.
- On that first journey, they build a mental map that helps them find their way on future flights — even when they're blown off-course! They do this using lots of different cues, which include:
  - Visual landmarks
  - Smell (seabirds use this when landmarks are scarce)
  - The sun and stars
  - Earth's magnetic field (basically a built-in GPS system known as "magnetoreception")

## WHAT THREATS DO MIGRATING BIRDS FACE?

- **Windows and Glass:** Migrating birds can get disoriented and confused by window reflections, especially when they're passing through unfamiliar territory. Window collisions kill more than 1 billion birds a year in the United States alone!
- **Artificial Lights:** Artificial light can confuse night-migrating birds and lure them towards cities, where they face threats from window collisions and domestic cats.
- Other human-caused threats include habitat loss, pesticides, and plastic pollution.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP MIGRATING BIRDS?

- There are lots of ways we can help birds have a safe journey, including by [making windows bird-safe](#) and [turning lights out at night](#). The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has [additional tips: birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds/](https://birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds/)

# PLEDGE TO TAKE ACTION!

WHAT YOU  
CAN DO TO  
KEEP BIRDS  
SAFE FROM  
COLLISIONS

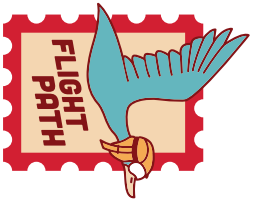
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I, \_\_\_\_\_, pledge  
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- Make my windows visible to birds using:
  - Window decals (spaced 2-inches apart)
  - Bird-safe tape
  - Window screens or netting
  - Window paint or soap (spaced 2-inches apart) during spring and fall migration seasons
- Turn off unnecessary lights during migration seasons:
  - Spring migration (March-June)
  - Fall migration (August-November)
- Spread awareness by sharing what I've learned with:
  - Family and friends
  - Neighbors and community
  - Local businesses and schools



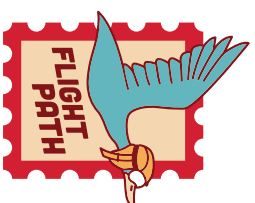
Learn more and track bird migration in your area:  
<https://www.stopbirdcollisions.org/>

### REMINDER – IN MY AREA:

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Fall migration happens... \_\_\_\_\_

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