

# BIRD'S EYE ART: *DIY WINDOW DECALS*

This activity is adapted from the National Audubon Society:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/make-migration-friendly-window-decorations>



## NOTES

### **AGE GROUP:**

Upper Elementary, Tweens, Teens, Adults

### **TYPE OF PROGRAM:**

Facilitated hands-on experience

### **ACTIVITY TIME:**

2-4 hours; Long Duration (days to months)

Visitors design their own window decals (inspired by local and migratory birds) and apply them to a window to reduce bird collisions. Over time, patrons will contribute more and more decals to fill up window space in advance of peak migration. This can be adapted to be a Take & Make kit if the library is unable to put decals on their windows.

## WHAT'S THE POINT?

- Window collisions are a major threat to migratory birds (each year, more than 1 billion birds die in the U.S. from window collisions!) but there are things humans can do to help mitigate the risks.
- Birds often mistake reflections on windows for open sky or habitat like trees and bushes and can fly right into the glass at high speed. Windows on lower stories that reflect bird habitat like bodies of water or trees are the highest risk to birds and should be a priority when deciding which windows to make "bird-safe."
- Small birds perceive gaps larger than 2" as navigable space they can fly through. These window decals, when spaced 2" or less apart, create a visual barrier that birds recognize and avoid.

## MATERIALS:

- White school glue, such as Elmer's Glue
- Dish soap
- Smooth plastic surface (such as plastic wrap, sandwich bags, or a sheet protector)
- Paintbrush
- Printable stencils for tracing (pages 6 and 7)
- Markers for decorating
- (Optional) White drawing paper for participants to create their own stencils
- (Optional) Guidebooks for participants to reference as they color their decals

## PREPARATION:

- Since it takes at least 2 hours for the glue on the decals to dry, consider doing this activity for an in-person program that meets daily or weekly, such as for a Tween/Teen Advisory Board, daily afterschool program, or weekly adult program so that you have time between sessions for the glue to dry.

- Identify a window in the library to make “bird safe” and wash the outside with window cleaner. Keep in mind the decals need to be placed on the outside of the window.
- If you are unable to place the decals on a library window, encourage the participants to make multiple decals and take them home to make their own windows “bird safe.”
- Print the included stencils (enough for at least 1 stencil per participant). You’ll need to place one every 2 inches across the whole window for them to work effectively.
- Prepare tables and chairs as a workspace for participants to create their decals.

## ACTIVITY:

### STEP 1:

Prepare the glue: pour two tablespoons of Elmer’s glue in a cup and then add a few drops of dish soap. Stir with a paintbrush until the soap is fully blended.



### STEP 2:

Lay the smooth plastic sheet over top of the stencils and use a paintbrush to apply glue to the plastic. Try to keep the stencil steady under the plastic!



### STEP 3:

Let the glue dry for at least two hours. For thicker amounts of glue, 24 hours of drying may be necessary. While you're waiting, consider the following activities:



- Screen the 16-minute Building for Birds episode: <https://www.wildhope.tv/episode/building-for-birds/>
  - 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 in Washington, D.C. and the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City. The film also highlights simple at-home solutions everyone can do to make their buildings bird safe!
- Go on a [Bird Scavenger Hunt](#) around the library grounds
- Wash the window that will have the decals
- Use window markers to draw a grid on the window to ensure the decals will be no more than 2 inches apart

### STEP 4:

When the glue is completely transparent and smooth, it's time to color! Use markers (permanent or water-based markers are both fine) and color very gently so you don't rip the decals.





**STEP 5:**

When the marker ink is dry, carefully remove the decal clings from the plastic sheet. Peel them off slowly and make sure they do not fold over and stick to themselves.

**STEP 6:**

Place them on the outside of your window by attaching the non-colored side of the decal to the window and carefully smoothing them. The decals will cling to the window by themselves; no need to add additional glue or tape. Decals should be spaced close together (no more than 2 inches apart). Feel free to fill in the space between decals using glass paint or markers, or even a bar of soap!

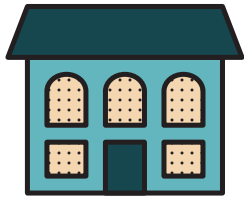
**FACILITATION TIPS:**

- Invite participants to use plain white paper to draw their own stencils of their favorite birds or elements of habitats, such as trees, flowers, or other foliage.
- Provide ornithology field guides for participants to reference as they color their stencils. Remind them that they can be as creative or realistic as they want!

## WHAT ARE OTHER WAYS WE CAN MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER FOR MIGRATING BIRDS?



**LIGHT:** Many birds migrate at night. Artificial lights from buildings can disorient birds or draw them off-course and cause them to crash. You can help by dimming, turning off, or installing motion sensors to exterior lights, and closing your blinds or curtains at night.



**WINDOWS:** In addition to window decals, you can create patterns on the outer surface of windows using craft paper, tape, stickers, or paint designed to be used on glass to prevent collisions. You can also try placing bird feeders near windows: Research shows that feeders closer than three feet can prevent birds from window strikes.



**PHYSICAL BARRIERS:** Screens, netting, or hanging cords in front of windows can be effective in stopping birds from window strikes.



