Bird-window collisions at Vancouver Island University: an assessment of severity and contributing factors

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Window strikes are one of the most common anthropogenic causes for bird mortality, as birds are unaware of the presence of clear and reflective windows. Birds collide with the glass in an attempt to fly into the apparent habitat that these windows reflect. Factors that influence bird-window collisions include proximity to vegetation, percent glass cover, building cover, window height, and window reflectivity. Bird strikes occur at Vancouver Island University (VIU), but the severity of the issue had not been previously examined. This study aimed to determine if bird-window collisions are a significant problem at VIU by surveying eight buildings for bird strike evidence, including live and dead birds, feathers, and dust marks on the glass. The results of this study provided evidence of at least 120 bird strikes during a 5 month study period (September 2017 – February 2018), involving seven out of the eight observed buildings. A total of 48 bird carcasses were retrieved of 14 species, and 50% of those carcasses were Varied Thrush. Buildings No. 355 (Arts and Science) and No. 305 (Library) were identified as serious contributors to bird strikes, with a minimum of 5 carcasses found for each. Reflective, dark-tinted windows with tall vegetation within 2 to 8m of the building appeared to greatly contribute to bird strikes. A Citizen Science component of the project involving the VIU community provided 26 additional bird collision reports. In conclusion, it was demonstrated that bird-window collisions are a significant problem at VIU, which warrants investigation into bird strike mitigation.