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## Birds versus buildings a deadly problem in Toronto

Local non-profit FLAP shows thousands of dead birds at annual layout to remind people how fatal buildings can be for our feathered friends.

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RICK MADONIK / TORONTO STAR [Order this photo](#)

Volunteers follow a pencil outline to line up dead birds in the larger shape of a bird in flight in an event by Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) at the Royal Ontario Museum on Friday. FLAP displayed 1,800 dead birds in a bid to raise awareness of how birds are at risk from highrises in the GTA.

By: **Laura Armstrong** Staff Reporter, Published on Sun Mar 22 2015

Scene: a bird, swooping through the sky or hopping from tree to tree, crashes into a clear glass window.

It's the perfect commercial for a window cleaner, but Toronto-based non-profit Fatal Light Awareness Program Canada says such collisions are serious business. They're one of the leading causes of bird death.

On Friday, about 40 FLAP volunteers implored the public to really grasp the impact — no pun intended, they said — of the crashes by displaying the bodies of about 1,800 crash victims at their annual bird layout, hosted by the Royal Ontario Museum.

"Year after year, we do this to educate the public," said FLAP executive director Michael Mesure. "When people see this, they're shocked by it."

"This" is the hundreds of bird bodies from 95 different species — varying in shape, size and colour — laid out on a crisp, white canvas on the floor of the ROM's Queen's Park Rotunda. Six of the species in the layout, like the Canada Warbler, are considered at risk.

It took the volunteers about an hour to remove each frozen species from their designated Ziploc bag and place and cluster the carcasses to create the silhouette of a bird.

Time is of the essence; there's a museum full of minds to mold and the birds can only last a few hours out of preservation.

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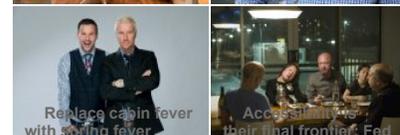
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Any building whose façade is part glass will be hit by between one and 10 birds annually, said Mesure. Only cats kill more birds each year.



“If we take the city of Toronto, there’s more than 940,000 registered structures. That means there could be up to 10 million (collisions) a year, just in the GTA,” he said.

Toronto is a highly sensitive area for migratory birds because they like to follow the shorelines of large bodies of water and stop, rest and feed in the ravines and trees by the lake.

“They know through thousands of years of migrating this is a prime location to migrate through,” Mesure said.

Some local buildings, like the Consilium Place in Scarborough, have had success reducing the number of bird collisions in recent years by applying a visible marker to their glass, but Mesure says many existing businesses are reluctant to make changes to their façade for either cost or esthetic reasons.

But it’s necessary, Mesure said. At his worst pickup years ago, he and fellow volunteers worked at two buildings for about six hours. They stopped counting at 500 crash victims, some of which were still alive.

“It was so bad that day, you would be bending down to pick up a bird and one or two would’ve fallen on your back. It was hailing birds, quite frankly.”

While pickups like that are rare, other volunteers have collected their fare share of birds more recently. Sarah Gates, 31, from Scarborough said she and fellow volunteer Gavin Day frantically picked up about 36 birds in one day last April. Rewardingly, she said, some were still alive.

“We ended up releasing a colony of them in the forest so they were all together,” Gates said. “But it gets hard to see all of these little guys and every day know that not a lot is being done about it.”

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