

# BIRD-WINDOW COLLISION PROTOCOL

University of Rochester | Fall 2025

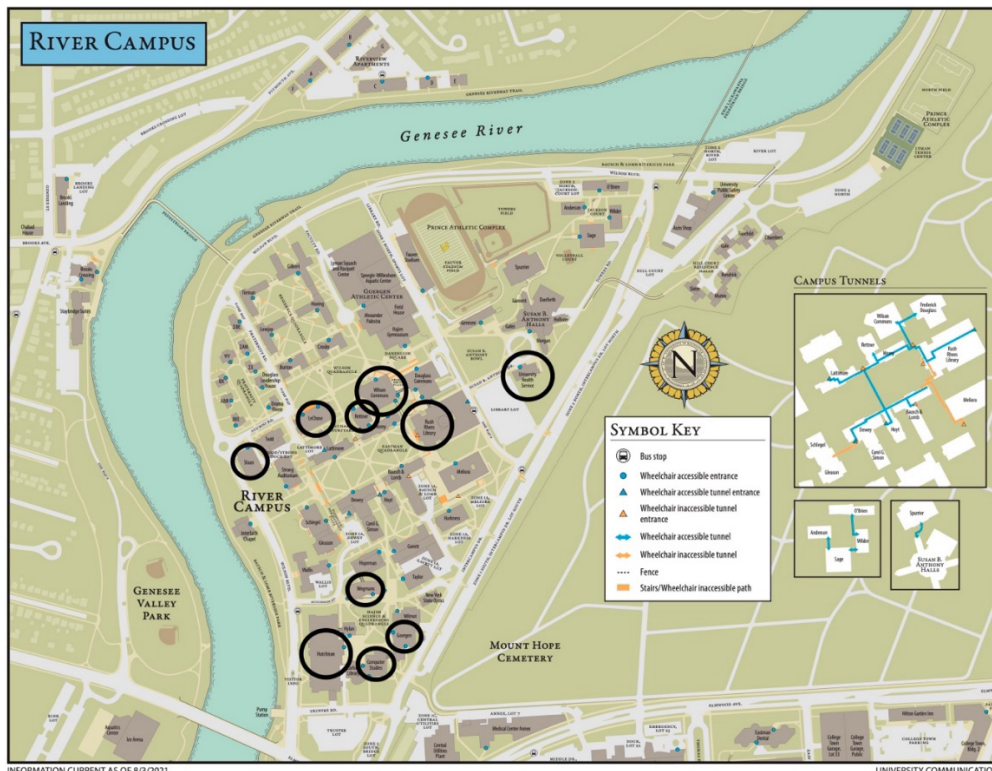
## OVERVIEW

Welcome to Year Two of Smash the Crash at the University of Rochester. This first phase of this bird-window collision study will commence on Monday, September 1st, and continue through Friday, November 7th. During that time, researchers will survey a sample of twelve buildings on campus for signs of window collisions, including whole and partial carcasses. Surveys will occur five times per week, but you will only be responsible for surveying the days you signed up for, though we encourage researchers to survey at least 2 days a week and survey more than one building each time.

Data will be collected on the location of the collision and the species of bird discovered. At the end of the survey, we will use our data to grasp the extent of the bird collision problem at the University of Rochester and recommend bird-safe treatments that will help our leaders protect bird populations on campus. Observations of bird-window collisions will be submitted through a form found [here](#).

## SURVEY PROTOCOL

For this study, we will survey twelve buildings across campus. They are mapped, named, and coded below.



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Rush Rhees Library	RRL
Wilson Commons	WC
Rettner Hall	RH
Sloan Performing Arts Center	SPAC
LeChase Hall	LH
Wegman's Hall	WH
Goergen Hall	GH
Computer Studies Building	CSB
Hutchinson Hall	HuH
University Health Services	UHS
Sage Art Center	SAC
Kendrick Hall	KH

The north façade of each building should be coded N, the south S, the east E, and the west W. The north façade of Rush Rhees Library would thus be coded as RRL-N. This is incorporated in the online form you will use.

We will survey each building every weekday between Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, and Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>. This will allow us to develop a reasonable estimate of the number of birds that collide into windows during fall migration, the largest period of bird-window collisions annually (at least nationally). Although species move at different times, birds in the *Passeri* suborder, or songbirds, are known to be most vulnerable to window collisions, and the majority of songbird migration will occur in this span of time.

Surveys will occur in the morning or afternoon. Studies have shown that the majority of collisions occur between 7 and 11 AM and that scavengers (e.g., cats, squirrels, dogs, groundhogs, and birds of prey) tend to avoid taking carcasses until later in the evening. Surveying within this window will help us develop a picture of collisions in the city. You can choose to survey at whatever time works for you, but please note what time you do survey each week, particularly if it varies.

Working independently (or pairs if you prefer), researchers will walk the perimeter of each building. If in a pair, one researcher moving clockwise and the other counterclockwise. Independent passes will help minimize false negatives. Prepare to spend at least thirty minutes for each building. The schedule to sign up for a building assignments is available [here](#).

During the walk, you will scan for evidence of window collisions. The most obvious sign will be a carcass, but you might also find powder down, feather piles, or bodily fluids on the ground or on nearby windows. Scanning of the building should extend six feet from the walls. Pay close attention to shrubbery and look carefully through ground cover, especially as leaves fall in the coming weeks.

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***We will not be collecting carcasses.*** Instead, you will take photos of the bird from three angles: ventral, dorsal, and lateral. You should use gloves to position the bird. This will help with species identification. Field guides (e.g., the *Field Guide to Eastern Birds* or National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*) can aid with this. You could also use Merlin ID, iNaturalist, or Google Image. If you are uncertain, please contact the survey coordinator. When you are done with your photographs, you should leave the carcass where you found it. Leaving it intact will help us avoid duplicate counts. On the back end of the data, there will be someone marking duplicates and species ID, hence it is important to enter the correct email of an address you check frequently.

You will record the following in the event that you find evidence of a collision: the location (using the building and façade code), the day and time of observation, your name, and the species. You will upload this data using the Survey123 link.

On occasion, you might find an injured bird or witness a collision yourself. If this happens, please follow FLAP Canada's [protocol](#) for handling injured birds and call one of the two wildlife rehabilitators listed below. Do NOT handle birds of prey. If you are uncomfortable handling a live bird, please contact the survey coordinator.

Charlotte "Charli" Rohack	409.974.1840
Kris Forsythe-King	315.374.4542

In the event you do not find any evidence on your patrol, you do not have to submit the form, rather please indicate in the sign-up spreadsheet to confirm you conducted the survey but did not find any evidence of a bird-window collision.

### **PRIVACY, SAFETY, & OTHER CONCERNS**

Please respect the privacy of building occupants. We have sought permission from facilities to conduct our survey, but it is important that you remain quiet and do not peer into the windows.

Do not use your cell phones except to take photos and upload data. This will not only distract from the survey but also potentially disrupt building occupants. If you have to use your phone for a call or text, please pause and resume the survey when you have finished.

As you monitor the buildings for evidence of collisions, you might get odd looks or curious inquiries. Consider this an opportunity to educate others about the problem. You can always direct someone to the website or to the study coordinator if you do not have an answer. If anyone harasses you, call the study coordinator immediately. Campus security will also be aware of our study if you wish to contact them for help in the event of harassment.

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Handling live or dead birds for the purpose of photographs or rehabilitation entails a degree of risk around zoonotic disease transmission. Always wear gloves, particularly if you have any open wounds. Wash your hands with sanitizer after.

It is possible that you might find a bat during your survey, either on the ground or low on a building. Bats might carry rabies, so it is important that you leave it alone and contact the survey coordinator for assistance.

Be aware of inclement weather and other adverse environmental conditions. If bad weather is predicted during the scheduled time, please go earlier, or later, and note this in your report.

## **SUPPLIES**

Please bring the following: 1) a smart phone or digital camera (a smart phone is preferred so that you can upload your data immediately); 2) disposable gloves; 3) brown paper bags; and 4) hand sanitizer.

## **HELPFUL LINKS**

[Sign-Up Spreadsheet](#)

[Observation Form](#)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This document was adapted from the protocol developed by Hager and Cosentino (2014) and later developed further by the [Duke University Bird Collision Project](#). It also draws on protocols made by [FLAP Canada](#) and the [American Bird Conservancy](#) for building monitoring.