

# **BIRD-WINDOW COLLISIONS BUILDING MONITORING PROTOCOL**

Downtown Rochester, with the Rochester Birding Association | Spring 2026

## **OVERVIEW**

Welcome (back) to *Smash the Crash*.

The second downtown phase of our ongoing study of bird-window collisions in Rochester will begin on Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, and continue through Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup> (subject to change). During that time, we will survey 12 buildings along 2 routes downtown for signs of window collisions, with a focus on whole or partial carcasses. Surveys will occur daily in the early morning (from 7 to 11 AM), but you will only be responsible for 1-2 days of the week, on the route you were assigned.

Data will be collected on the location of the collision and the species of bird. At the end of the survey, we will use our data to understand the extent of the bird collision problem and advocate for bird-safe retrofits and bird-friendly policy. Observations of these bird-window collisions will be submitted through a form found [here](#).

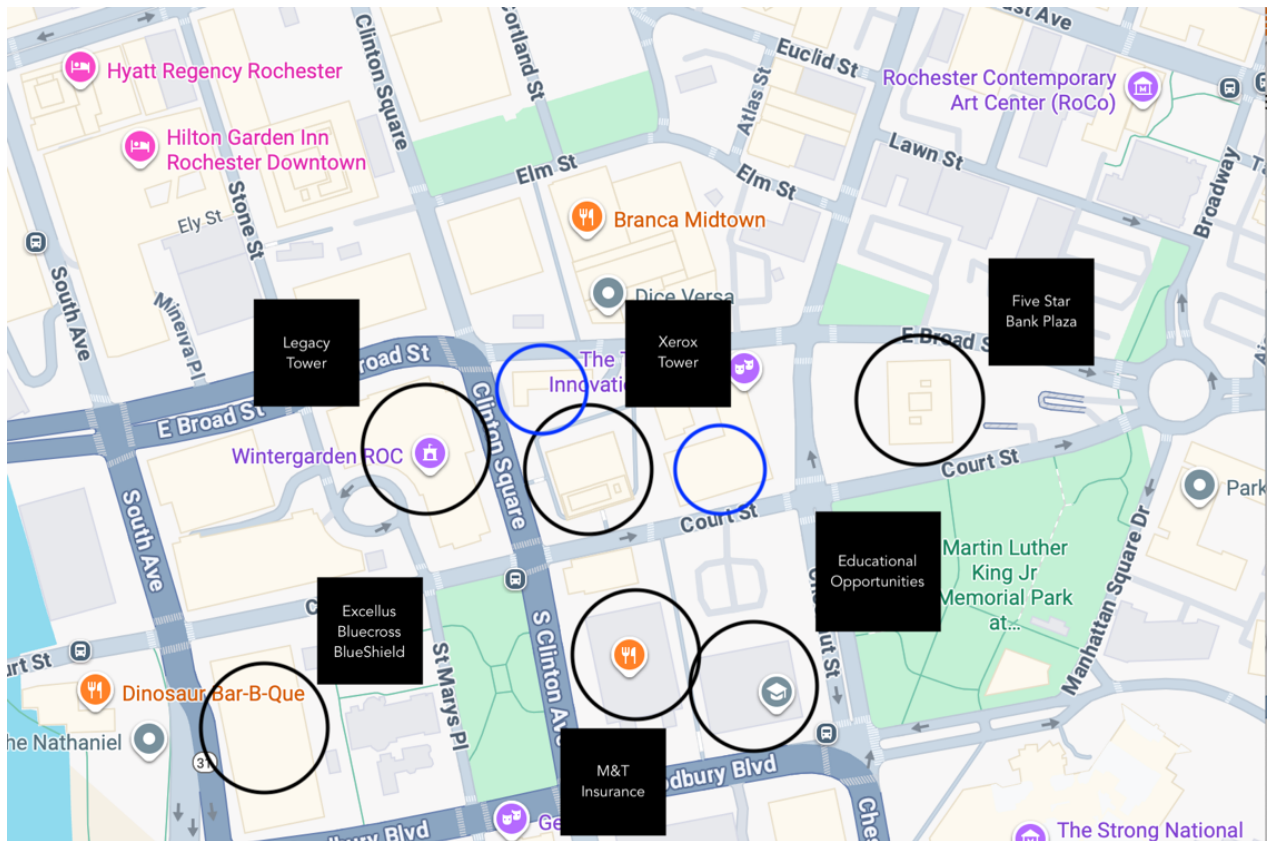
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## SURVEY PROTOCOL

For this study, we will survey 12 buildings in downtown Rochester that are expected to be the most lethal to birds. They are named, mapped, and numbered below—black circles surround the required buildings (the black boxes nearby name them) and blue circles mark optional buildings if you have time and wish to survey more of them.

### *Route One*



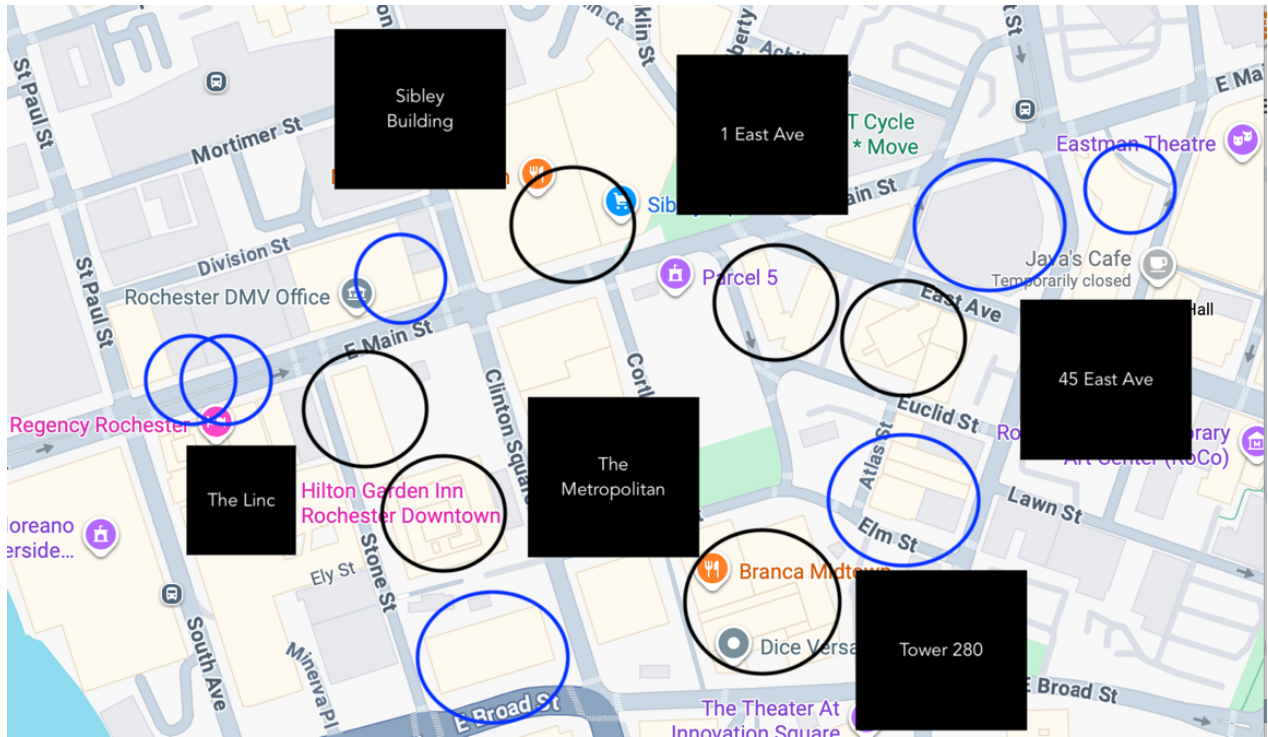
- Building 1 Five Star Bank Plaza (100 Chestnut St.)
- Building 2 Xerox Tower (100 S. Clinton Ave.)
- Building 3 M&T Bank (180 S. Clinton Ave.)
- Building 4 Rochester Educational Opportunities Center (161 Chestnut St.)
- Building 5 Legacy Tower (1 Bausch and Lomb Pl.)
- Building 6 Excellus BlueCross BlueShield (165 Court St.)
  
- Optional 1 Innovation Square (131 Chestnut St.)

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Optional 2 Farmhouse Table Midtown (90 S. Clinton Ave.)

## Route Two



- Building 1 Tower 280 (280 E. Broad St.)
- Building 2 The Metropolitan (1 S. Clinton Ave.)
- Building 3 The Linc (183 E. Main St.)
- Building 4 Sibley Square (260 E. Main St.)
- Building 5 1 East Ave.
- Building 6 45 East Ave.

- Optional 1 Clinton Square (75 S. Clinton Ave.)
- Optional 2 Seneca Building (60 S. Clinton Ave.)
- Optional 3 150 Main St.
- Optional 4 Social Security Administration (200 Main St.)
- Optional 5 Courthouse (50 East Ave.)
- Optional 6 Miller Center (25 Gibbs St.)
- Optional 7 88 on Elm (88 Elm St.)

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We will survey each building every day of the week between Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, and Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. This will allow us to develop a reasonable estimate of the number of birds that collide into windows during spring migration. 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.

You will be assigned one route above. Working individually or in pairs, you will cover the buildings along your route in whatever order you choose as long as you survey all six. You do need to survey the optional buildings. Prepare to spend at least sixty minutes for each route. The schedule is [here](#).

If you cannot conduct a survey during your scheduled shift, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. Contact the survey coordinator *only* if you have already tried to find someone and cannot. We will make a WhatsApp group available for finding a replacement.

Surveys will occur in the morning. 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. If, due to a serious conflict, you cannot survey between 7 and 11 AM, please find a replacement or, if that is not possible, monitor when you can and leave a note in the comments about the late survey.

During your schedule, you will walk the perimeter of the building(s) you have selected. This will include carcasses (whole and partial), powder down, feather piles, and bodily fluids (e.g., oil and blood). Scanning of the building should extend six feet from the walls. Pay close attention to shrubbery and look carefully through ground cover.

Once you have completed your survey, please submit a report using the Survey123 form linked [here](#). You can enter this using your browser, or the Survey123 app. We recommend that you submit this as soon as you have finished.

Here are some instructions for filling out the survey, based on what you might find:

If you find a carcass (whole or partial):

- 1) Take three pictures:

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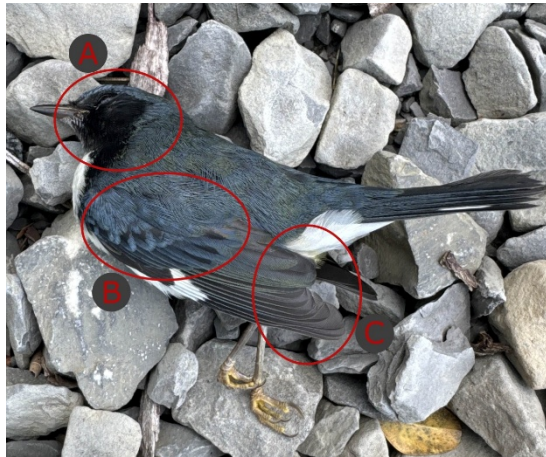
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- a. Dorsal – An image of the back of the bird.  
Ensure that the nape, back, and top of the tail are visible.



*Figure 1- Image of deceased Tennessee Warbler.  
A) Nape; the area just below the head on the back of the bird. B) The back of the bird. C) The topside of the tail.*

- b. Lateral – An image of the side of the bird.  
A clear image of the face is critical. If possible, choose whichever side of the face is less decayed, particularly around the eye (orbital feathers + supercilium).



*Figure 2 - Image of deceased Black-Throated Blue Warbler.  
A) Face. B) Covert feathers of the wing; generally, the most colorful part of the wing. C) Primary feather projection; shape of the wing. Shape is more visible when wing is extended.*

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- c. Ventral – An image of the belly of the bird.  
Both the breast and the underside of the tail should be visible and in focus.

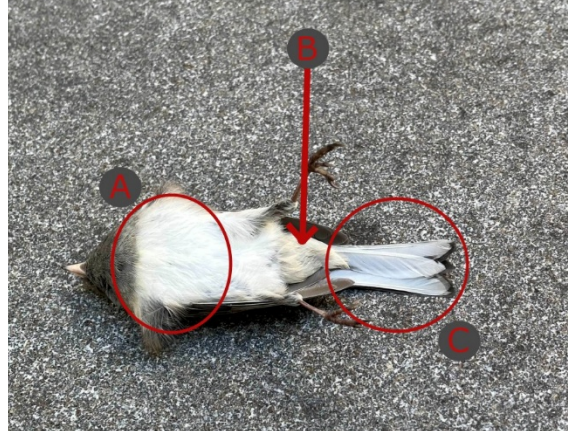


Figure 3- Image of deceased Dark-Eyed Junco.  
A) Breast; often streaky or patterned, more so than the rest of the belly. B) Undertail coverts; often monochromatic. C) Underside of the tail.

The following features should be visible in at least one of the three images taken: the legs, tail, wing(s), and beak.

You should use gloves to position the bird. This will help with species identification.

Make sure the image is taken in natural/white light to ensure that the color is not altered. This may mean moving where you take the image from to prevent yourself from casting a shadow on the bird.

- 2) Fill out every answer of the Survey123 form.

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 species identification, or you could use Merlin ID, iNaturalist, or Google Image. If you are uncertain, please write "unknown".

- 3) Remove the carcass:

A) If the carcass is intact (no decomposition):

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Contact the survey coordinator with the species and a photograph. Upon approval, you may collect the bird in a Ziploc bag and await further instruction for specimen collection, for Dr. Susan Pagano (RIT).

### **B) If the carcass is whole, but decomposed, or partial:**

Please remove the carcass however you are most comfortable, using gloves. You may dispose of it in a waste receptacle, move it away from the building and into a wooded area to decompose, or bury it, however you see appropriate.

If you do not feel comfortable moving the bird, note this in the comments so that we can avoid duplicates later during our data analysis.

### **If you find feather piles, powder down, or bodily fluids:**

- 1) Fill out every answer of the Survey123 form EXCEPT the photo section. You do NOT need to take any photos. You do not need to move or interact with the evidence.
- 2) Submit.

### **If you find multiple forms of evidence of collision:**

- 1) Submit one report per piece of evidence. Once you complete the first survey, you will be prompted to submit a second report.

### **If you find nothing:**

- 1) Fill out the first four required questions of the Survey 123 form (name, email, date, report). On the “report” question, mark “no.”
- 2) Submit.

### **If you find a live bird (injured or stunned):**

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 then call one of the wildlife rehabilitators listed below. Do NOT handle birds of prey. If you are uncomfortable handling a live bird, please contact your survey coordinator.

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Charlotte “Charli” Rohack      409.974.1840  
Kris Forsythe-King              315.374.4542

Richard Fadok                      508.838.9338

If you submit a report and realize you made a mistake:

- 1) Submit a second report, using the correct answers.
- 2) Write in the “comments” section of the Survey123 form that the first report was a mistake.

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

Handling live or dead birds for the purpose of photographs or rehabilitation entails a degree of risk around zoonotic disease transmission. Always wear protective gear (i.e., plastic 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. Your safety is paramount; please do not survey if you do not feel safe. You are welcome and encouraged to survey in a pair.

Please respect the privacy of building occupants. It is important that you 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 our [website](#) or to the study coordinator if you do not have an answer. If anyone harasses you, call the study coordinator immediately.

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## **PARKING**

On the weekends, there is free street parking as well as free parking in all of the city garages; the two closest to the routes are the Mortimer Street Garage and the South Avenue Garage.

During the week, you can find and pay for street parking. You can also use one of the downtown city garages or one of the independent paid lots, including the East End Garage, LAZ Parking (Washington Square Garage), and Midtown Garage. You can also find a free public parking lot at the end of Marshall St. by Wadsworth Park and take the pedestrian bridge. There is also free 2-hour street parking on Gibbs St. between University and Delevan.

## **SUPPLIES**

Please bring the following:

- 1) a smart phone
- 2) disposable gloves
- 3) brown paper bags
- 4) hand sanitizer
- 5) gallon-sized Ziploc bags
- 6) plastic grocery bags

## **HELPFUL LINKS**

[Study Website](#)

[Sign-Up Sheet](#)

[Observation Form](#)

[View Current Results](#)

## **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

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also draws on protocols made by [FLAP Canada](#) and the [American Bird Conservancy](#) for building monitoring.

It was drafted by Dr. Richard Fadok and then later updated by Daniel McDermott, Richard Fadok, and Bryden Kerchoff.