

Songbirds

The term songbird refers to birds in the order Passeriformes also known as perching birds. All native songbirds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

What is the common damage caused by songbirds? Songbirds are very well received and do not cause much damage (birdfeeders are more problematic than the birds). Complaints about songbirds stem from birds nesting in unfavorable locations or from birds acting aggressively toward their reflections and causing damage to windows. Occasionally, songbirds will get trapped in buildings.

Can a WCA write a depredation permit? A federal depredation permit must be obtained for songbirds. The USDA Wildlife Services facilitates the procurement of federal depredation permits through the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia. Once the federal permit is received, a WCA can write the required state depredation permit.

Can songbirds be relocated? No, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act it is illegal to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird without a federal permit.

What can I do with sick or injured songbirds? There are licensed [rehabilitators](#) across the state that can take in injured or orphaned songbirds. Advise the individual to leave the bird alone for 24 hours to see if it can recover on its own.

A common myth is if a nestling falls out of a nest and gets put back, the adult birds will smell human scent and abandon their offspring. This is not true. Most birds do not have a sense of smell and therefore cannot detect a human's scent. If the individual knows where the nest is, advise them to put the nestling back.

There is a period when birds are old enough to be out of the nest but are unable to fly. During this time young are called fledglings. It is normal behavior for fledglings to be on the ground and hopping around. In these situations, advise the caller to leave the bird alone or move it to an area close by where it is not in any immediate danger.

Songbirds are susceptible to conjunctivitis, avian pox, and salmonella. These diseases often lead to death. Bird feeders facilitate the spread of these diseases by attracting large numbers of birds into a small area. If individuals are noticing dead birds around a birdfeeder, advise the individual to wash birdfeeders in a 10% bleach solution.

Are there safety concerns? No, however it is good practice to wear gloves when handling any animal.

Non-lethal Options:

- Songbirds that are stuck inside buildings can be trapped and removed but must be released on site.
- Harassment
 - Mylar strips, flashing tape, or old CDs create bright glares in sunlight which can act as a visual deterrent for birds.
 - Loud noises such as clapping, yelling, or banging pots and pans can deter birds if they have just started coming into the area and are persistent every time the birds land.
- Exclusion
 - Fine mesh netting can be placed over vents and openings to prevent birds from having access into a residence.
 - Songbirds will act territorially during breeding season. During this time, if they can see their reflections, they may act aggressively by thinking their reflection is another bird. Individuals can use soap, one-way transparent tape, or tempera paint to prevent birds from seeing their reflections.

Lethal Options:

- A federal permit is always required to take migratory birds.
 - USDA Wildlife Services facilitates the procurement of federal depredation permits through the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia.
 - Active nests (nests with eggs or nestlings) are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and cannot be removed without a federal permit. Inactive or empty nests can be removed without any permits.
- In addition to the federal permitting, a state depredation permit is required and can be written by a WCA, wildlife enforcement officer or district biologist.

