



## BIRDS HITTING WINDOWS

The evening skies of autumn often carry the flight of Canada's two smallest species of owls, the northern pygmy and the northern saw-whet, as they begin their southern journey to a warmer winter. The owls are en route from their breeding grounds in the Caribou and other high altitude areas. While some of the owls are permanent BC residents, others depart during the shortening days of early October to the milder climate of the latitudes below, continuing to do so until December.

A good number of both species migrate directly over the greater Vancouver skyline and as a result often injure themselves flying into buildings and homes. The Wildlife Rescue Association receives many owls each year that have broken their wings or suffered concussions as a result of flying into residential and commercial windows. The owls are confused by the lights inside the buildings and are unable to distinguish the glass panes.

A wide range of birds experience similar injuries in the spring and fall migration periods. Though daytime flyers can easily be alerted to a window's presence with adhesive silhouettes, the only preventative measure for the owls is to either close the blinds or curtains in residences as evening sets in and to turn off the commercial lights as the working day ends.

The adult owls of these two species are often mistaken for babies because they are only around 10 centimeters in length and weigh from 60 to 90 grams. Their small talons, however, are very powerful and sharp and expertly used at feeding times. The saw-whet owls prey primarily on mice and insects and enjoy a pattern of dawn and dusk meals. The pygmy owls, on the other hand, are particularly aggressive for their small size and usually hunt during daylight hours to easily catch and carry small birds that equal or exceed their own size and weight.

So, as winter descends upon the Vancouver area, remember these little owls as they journey south and what we can do to ensure that they reach their destination.

Should anyone find an injured bird, the best way to help it is to:

1. Cover the injured bird with a large towel or sweater, keeping the feet and beak away from your face and hands.
2. Wrap the bird loosely with the towel.
3. Place it in a securely closed cardboard box with small air holes.
4. Do not offer food or water as injured animals are in a state of shock.

5. Contact the Wildlife Rescue Association as soon as possible at 526-7275 for further instructions.

One reason that birds fly into windows is that they see a reflection of the sky in the glass. Placing a hawk silhouette on the outside of any glass breaks up this point of reference. A diving hawk will alert them to danger. The higher it is placed on the glass window or sliding door, the more effective it will be. The glass should be clean so it will adhere properly and it should be placed in a diving position.