



Image Credit: Chungnam Wild Animal Rescue Center

Open Eyes to Birds' Sorrow Emerging Protections for Birds in South Korea

By Soop Kim

In September 2020, a photo exhibition was held to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Chungnam Wildlife Rescue Center (CWRC) in Yongsan-gu, Seoul. The exhibition's title was "Did we meet before?" There were carcasses and pictures of birds who were injured by various obstacles: a Vinous-Throated Parrotbill that had been killed by a window strike; an Eurasian Sparrowhawk whose feet had been entangled with disused nets; a Common Kestrel that had been stuck in flypaper; an Eurasian Eagle Owl that has been hit by a car; and the list

went on. Audiences could see wildlife that had suffered from obstacles that we made. It was not a large-scale exhibition, but it was the first one in South Korea that showed the effects of man-made structures. Since 2010, CWRC has been rescuing wildlife and educating citizens who are interested in wildlife and their survival.

It was in the 2000s that people started to pay attention to the difficulties experienced by birds. One of the first studies about birds' troubles in South Korea was the "Research on Habitat

Improvement for Migratory Birds" conducted in Hong-do in 2008 and 2009. Hong-do is an island in the middle of the east Asian-Australasian flyway. According to this study, the number of bird fatalities in Hong-do was 416 (the size of the island is only 247 acres). 73% of the total accidents occurred between March and May, when the most birds migrate, and the second most common cause of accidents was collision with artificial structures. Seoul National University undertook another early study related to bird fatalities on its campus. They found that

from 2007 to 2011, 196 birds representing 33 species suffered from window strikes on campus. While the studies on window strikes gradually accumulated, the national government's Cultural Heritage Administration started making "Bird Saver." In 2009, Bird Saver was a simple black sticker that looked like a raptor. Bird Saver stickers were attached to various buildings and glass walls for several years in an effort to decrease window strikes, but a subsequent study found that these stickers were not effective. Instead, the study found that stickers attached at a small distance from window surfaces (5cm to 10cm) would enable birds to better recognize the glass and prevent window strikes. Based on this study, an effort has been made to revise the way to prevent window strikes.

In 2018, wide-spread research about window strikes began throughout South Korea. With the [Naturing app](#), anyone with a cellphone can participate. You can take pictures of the birds injured by the window strikes and upload them to Naturing. So far, more than 34,000 birds have been recorded in Naturing! There is one rule when you take pictures of the bird killed by window strike: take a picture with a card named "Save the Bids." The Ministry of Environment and the National Institute of Ecology (NIE) made the card (images to the left). On one side, there is a ruler that can measure the birds' size; while on the other there is a color chart that can initialize the color variation depending on the camera. In 2021, a brochure

named "[Guidelines for Citizen Participation in Investigation of Wild Birds Window Strikes](#)" was published by NIE. It includes details of what to do when you find birds who have struck a window. Plus, anyone can download it from the NIE.

In addition, a group named Windowstrike in Ewha has consistently recorded window collisions occurring on the Ewha Women's University campus since 2019. A large number of window collisions have occurred at a building called the Ewha Campus Complex (ECC) because the side of the building is designed with glass and greenery on the

roof. Many birds who came to rest in the rooftop foliage often collided with the glass windows, particularly younger birds. The students insisted that the school should take action related to the windows, but the school didn't budge an inch because it would modify the appearance of the building, which was mainly design by the well-known French architecture Dominique Perrault. Still, many people are raising their voices for birds, and many articles about ECC's window strike have been published.

In early 2022, people's interest in window strikes increased when Tim Beatley's *The Bird-Friendly*



City was published in Korean. In addition, a lecture on window strikes was held to celebrate the publication of the book detailing the difficulties birds may face in cities, including window strikes. The course was delivered by Young-Jun Kim, Director of the Division of Zoological Research and Management at NIE, who has worked hard to communicate the consequences of window strikes for a long time. The lecture video was runs two hours but has recorded more than 3,000 views!

Thanks to the increased interest, the Bird Collision Prevention Act passed the plenary session of the National Assembly on May 29, 2022. This bill requires public buildings to be equipped with artificial structures to minimize harm to wild birds. There is still a long way to go as the Act only regulates public buildings. However, it is a meaningful step

in the effort to prevent window strikes.

Recently, various new media focusing on birds is pouring in. Youtube channels record birding, journals highlight birdwatching, and new documentaries focus on birds, etc. Each movement seems minor, but these movements can come together to create one big step. In the past 20 years, we have made a slow but significant step forward. As more and more people are interested in birds, I look forward to the next 20 years as those who care for birds keep increasing!

Soop Kim is the Korean language translator of Tim Beatley's The Bird-Friendly City and Gabe Brown's Dirt to Soil. Kim is a graduate of the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST).

Resources:

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Chungnam Wildlife Rescue Center. 2018. "Have we met? (Korean Edition)." Yangcheolbuk.

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Naturing app. <https://www.naturing.net/info/app>.



Ewha Campus Complex
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Eurasian Magpie
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