

# DATA *Nugget*

## Deadly windows

Featured scientist: Natasha Hagemeyer from Old Dominion University

### Research Background:

Glass makes for a great windowpane because you can see right through it! However, the fact that windows are see-through makes them very dangerous for birds. Have you ever accidentally run into a glass door, or been confused by a tall mirror in a restaurant? Just like people, birds can mistake a see-through window or a mirrored pane for an opening to fly through or a place to get food, and will accidentally fly into them.

These **window collisions**

can hurt the bird, or even kill it. Window collisions kill nearly 1 billion birds every year!

Urban areas, with lots of houses and stores, have a lot of windows. **Resident birds** that live in the area may get to know these buildings well, and may learn to avoid the windows. However, not all the birds in an area live there year-round. There are also **migrant birds** that fly through urban areas during their fall migrations. They will use gardens and parks in urban areas to rest along their journeys to their winter southern homes. During the fall migration, people have noticed that it seems like more birds fly into windows. This may be because migrant birds are not familiar with the local buildings. While looking for food and places to sleep, migrant birds might have more trouble identifying windows and fly into them more often. However, it could also be that there are simply more window collisions in the fall because there are more birds in the area when migrant and resident birds co-occur in urban areas.

Natasha was visiting a friend who worked at a zoo when he told her about a problem they were having. For a few weeks in the fall, they would find dead birds under the



Researchers identify the species of each bird caught in one of the nets used in the study. They then place a metal bracelet on one leg so they will know if they catch the same bird again.



Researcher identifying a yellow-rumped warbler, one of the birds captured in the net as part of the study.

windows, more than they would during the rest of the year. He wanted to figure out a way to prevent birds from hitting the exhibit windows. Natasha became interested in learning whether migrant birds were more likely to fly into windows than resident birds, or if the number of window collisions only increase in the fall because there are lots of birds around. To do this she would have to count the total number of birds in the area, and also the total number of birds that were killed in window collisions. To count the total number of birds in the area, Natasha hung nets that were about the same height as windows. When the birds got caught in the nets, Natasha could count and identify them. This data could then be used to calculate the proportion of migrants and residents flying at window-height. She put ten nets up once a week for four hours, over the course of 3 months, and checked them every 15 minutes for any birds who got caught.

Then, she also checked under the windows in the same area to see what birds were killed from window collisions. She checked the windows every morning and evening for the three months of the study. Different species of bird are migratory or resident in the area where Natasha did her study. Each bird caught in nets was examined to identify it to species using its feathers, which would tell us whether the bird was a migrant or a resident. The same was done for birds found dead below windows.

If window collisions are really more dangerous for migrants, she expected to see a higher proportion of migrants would fly into windows than were caught in the nets. But, if window collisions were in the same proportion as the birds caught in the nets, she would know that windows were just as dangerous for resident birds as for migrants.

***Scientific Question:*** Do migrant birds collide with windows more frequently than expected by their population?

***What is the hypothesis?*** Find the two hypotheses in the Research Background and underline them. A hypothesis is a proposed explanation for an observation, which can then be tested with experimentation or other types of studies. Having two alternative hypotheses means that more than one mechanism may explain a given observation. Experimentation can determine if one, both, or neither hypotheses are supported.

Scientific Data:

Use the data below to answer the scientific question:

Counts	Resident	Migrant	Total
Netted	50	129	
Window Collision	1	23	

Proportions	Resident	Migrant
Netted		
Window Collision		

What data will you graph to answer the question?

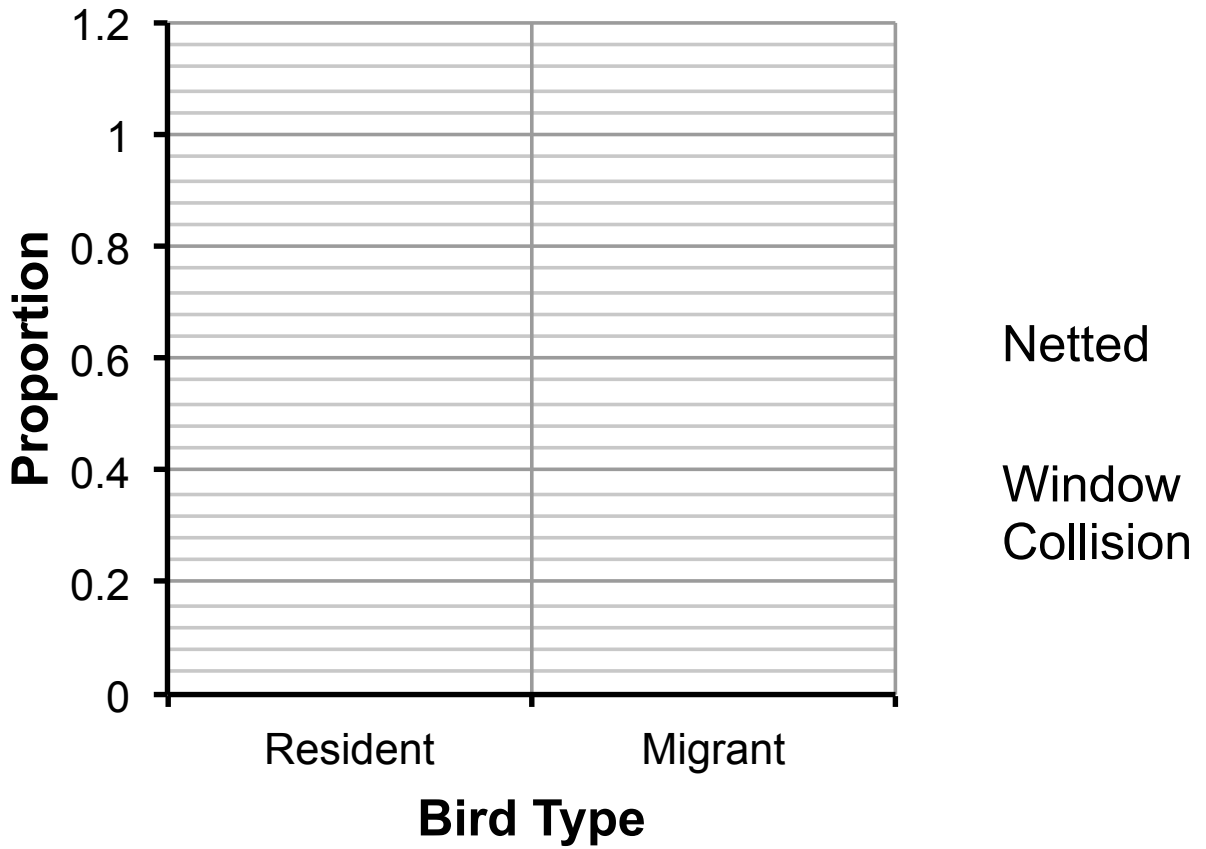
Independent variable: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dependent variables: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Draw your graph below:* Identify any changes, trends, or differences you see in your graph. Draw arrows pointing out what you see, and write one sentence describing what you see next to each arrow.



*Interpret the data:*

Make a claim that answers the scientific question.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What evidence was used to write your claim? Reference specific parts of the table or graph.

Explain your reasoning and why the evidence supports your claim. Connect the data back to the reasons why windows and mirrored surfaces may be so dangerous for birds.

Did the data support one, both, or either of Natasha's two alternative hypotheses? Use evidence to explain why or why not. If you feel the data was inconclusive, explain why.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Your next steps as a scientist:* Science is an ongoing process. What new question do you think should be investigated? What future data should be collected to answer your question?