



We were playing in the living room. I was about to get my little brother, Bucky, with my BEST move when...



"THUMP"
A bluebird just crashed into the window.



Mama said from the kitchen doorway, "Don't worry. I saw it fly away. It's OKAY."



I wondered if the bird was really okay.



Because... Once Bucky walked smack into the patio door. He got a goose egg. When I said it looked like it hurt, he cried and cried.



Another time, Papa grilled dinner on the deck. When he tried to come inside, he walked right into the glass door too. He dropped my hot dog. He and my mom laughed until they cried. Mama washed my hot dog in the sink and still made me eat it... Then I cried.



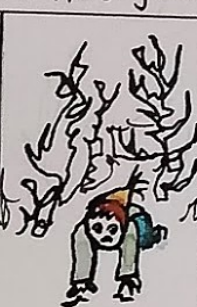
Do birds cry? I kept thinking about that bird. I wanted to find it and help it. But I was supposed to be helping watch Bucky. Speaking of Bucky, he was jumping off the couch and making dinosaur noises. That could only mean one thing. I was going to find that bird.



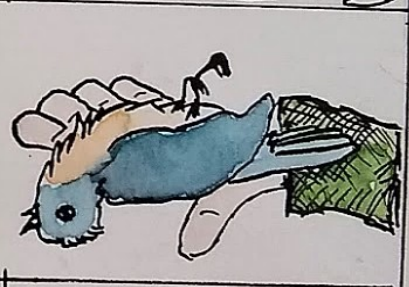
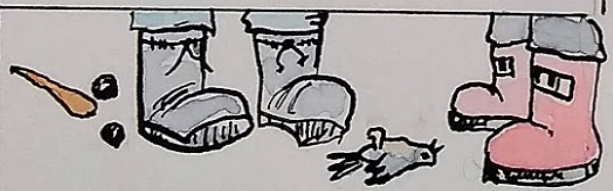


As soon as we got outside, Bucky wanted to go back in. I told him we were wildlife veterinarians with a mission.

Bucky love, love, loves games. He's good at finding little things too.



I looked under all the pickery bushes, and Bucky looked everywhere else.



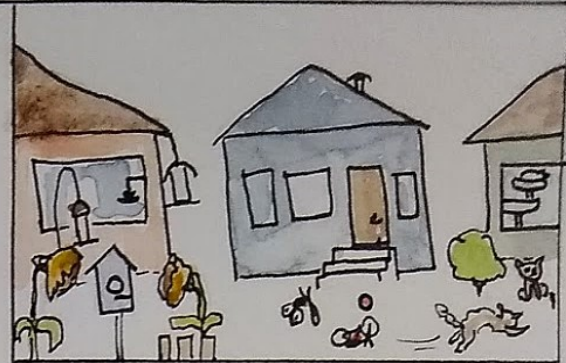
The bird was dead.



We tried to have a funeral, but Bucky's stick broke when we tried to dig with it. Then Papa called us inside.

Papa agreed to help with the funeral if we agreed to not touch the bird anymore.

Papa got a big shovel. We took him to where we'd left the bird.



Our neighbors on one side have bird feeders and a garden. The neighbors on the other side have kitties. I like our neighbors!



I found bwue

I found it!

Joyce, the neighbor with the garden, lets us eat her cherry tomatoes because we help her keep the cats out of her yard.

Bucky loves tomatoes. He probably thought he could trade a feather for a tomato even though it's barely spring.



Maybe we should just put cats in all the windows.

We told Joyce all about the bird. Joyce seemed very interested.

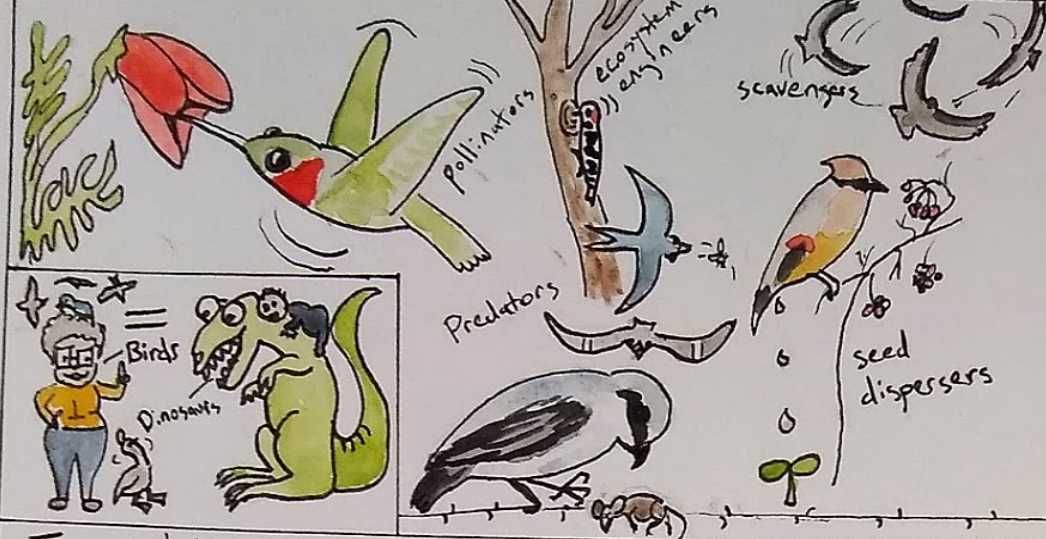
She told us she was still working on the cat problem, but she had found an easy fix for windows.



She had us look real close at her window, but I couldn't guess why. Papa figured it out.



Stripes! But why do birds care about stripes?



Joyce talks about birds as much as Bucky talks about dinosaurs. Some of what she says I can see for myself. Some of what she says I can't imagine... like that bird collisions with windows kill up to a BILLION birds a year.



Papa figures they mostly fly into skyscrapers while migrating. Joyce corrects him. HALF the fatalities happen at people's houses. Of all the collisions, most happen at or below the fourth floor.

We don't see many of the dead birds, because like the bird this morning, they often fly away before they die. Animals have also learned to check under what Joyce calls the problem windows in search of easy meals.



Why aren't birds more careful? Can't they learn to avoid windows?

Birds can't learn to avoid windows, but people can learn to make windows SAFE.

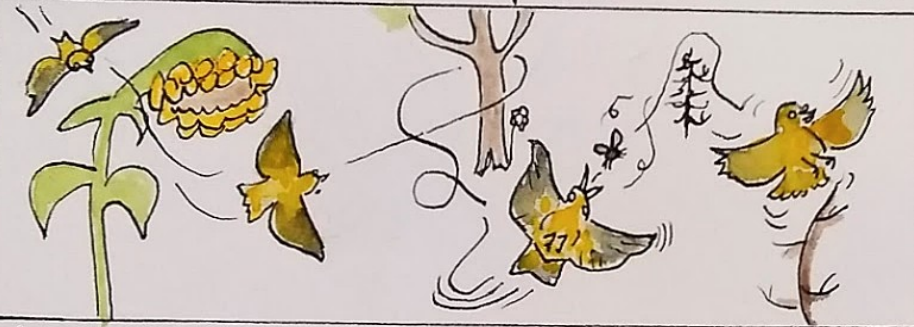




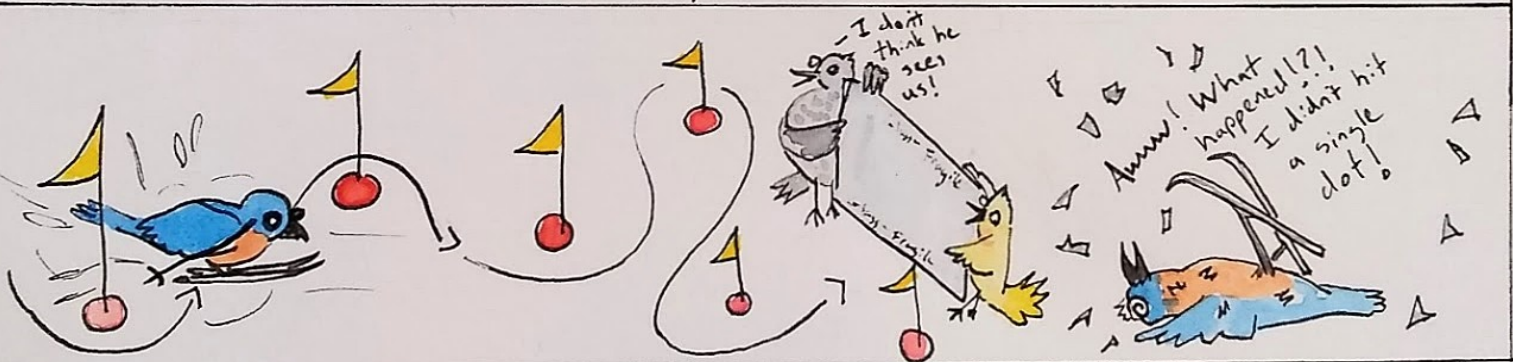
Sometimes birds don't see glass at all. Instead, they see a clear path to a place where they would like to go.



Other times, windows act like mirrors. Once we saw a cardinal pick a fight with his reflection. If a bird mistakes his reflection for another bird, he's not going to do much better with reflections of trees and sky.



Although many birds spend much of their lives flying, they rarely crash into objects that they can see. Scientists have found that birds avoid flying into spaces that are narrower than their wingspans or shorter than the tops of their heads to the tips of their toes.

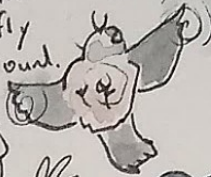
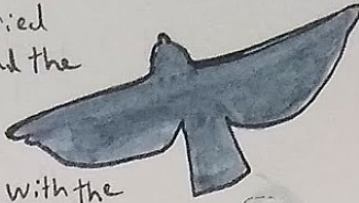


If we put a pattern on a window - say dots - birds will see each dot as a solid object. They will try to fly around the dots like skiers doing the slalom. To keep birds from flying into the glass between the dots, we can place the dots close enough together that a bird will make its birdy calculations that the space is too tight to safely squeeze through it. The magic spacing is 4 inches long by 2 inches height

This way's blocked.
Guess I'll take the long way.



The birds tried to fly around the hawks, if they saw them at all. With the stripes, the birds fly around, way, way around.



Decals →

Tempera paint →



The stripes on Joyce's windows are made with tape stuck to the outside of the glass so it's easy for birds to see it. Joyce used to have hawk silhouettes in this window, but when birds kept hitting it anyway, she switched to stripes.

Come check this out! Ta-Da! My work of art. If you don't like the tape, you can paint a design or put up decals spaced 4x2 inches apart.



I'm grateful...

Birds eat mosquitoes!

Birds remind us to see the beauty around us.

Umm, Joyce and birds and bwe and bluebirds!

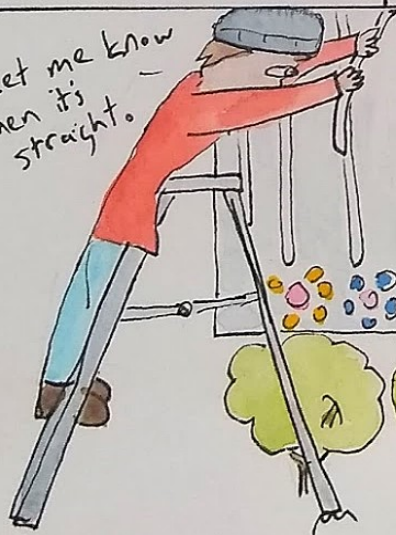
We can help birds!



Joyce gave us her extra tape and leftover tempera paint so we could make our windows bird-safe too.

At dinner that night, when we took turns saying what we are grateful for, we all said birds - even Bucky!

Let me know when it's straight.



Hold still - you have tape in your hair!



The next day we had fun making our windows bird-safe. Our painting was especially beautiful, and Bucky only made a bit of a mess. Mama and Papa said for our next project we were going to build a bluebird house! I can't wait.