IUPUI Bird Window Strike Project

Photographing Dead Birds:

Methods & Process

You found a dead bird while walking your route.

It's time to photograph the bird.

How do you go about doing this?

As there were no actual dead birds available to use when this guide was originally made, the role of "dead bird" was played by Zoom.

For humorous effect, we'll stick with that.

Zoom is clearly a Beanie-Baby . . . . and a turtle.

Zoom is a talented turtle – and method actor – and can emote "avian-ness" as well as any bird.

Setting the scene:

While flying along, undertaking a long migratory journey (as birds do), tragedy occurred.

Our bird had a fatal encounter with a campus building.

The Science and Engineering Laboratory Building – SELB – by the skywalk, to be precise . . . . .

Encountered during the morning survey of the EL route, the bird is examined and found to be dead.

It has ceased to be.

This is an ex-turtle . . . . bird.

Photographing of the bird's remains (prior to collecting the bird) commences.

What follows differs slightly from the original instructions.

You will take 3 photographs of a dead bird: *in situ*, *in situ* with data, and building views.

The *in situ* photograph is a photograph taken of the bird lying on the ground exactly as you found it.

If your bird is not on the pavement, grass blades, leaves, branches, or other material might obstruct your view of the bird. When possible, remove any material that is in the way so that you get a clear photo of the bird.

Photograph 1: *in situ* photograph

Take a photograph of the bird just as you found it lying on the ground.

Follow the naming convention described in the instructions.

YourLastName_building_aspect-section_date_view.jpg

In this example, the file name for the photo would be:

Schmalhofer_EL_W-5_2Sep2023_insitu.jpg

Whether you take a close-up photo, or have a little more distance, as in the previous photo, is up to you.

The photo should show the entire body of the bird (head to tail tip) and – most importantly – should be in focus.

Photograph 2: *in situ* with data photograph

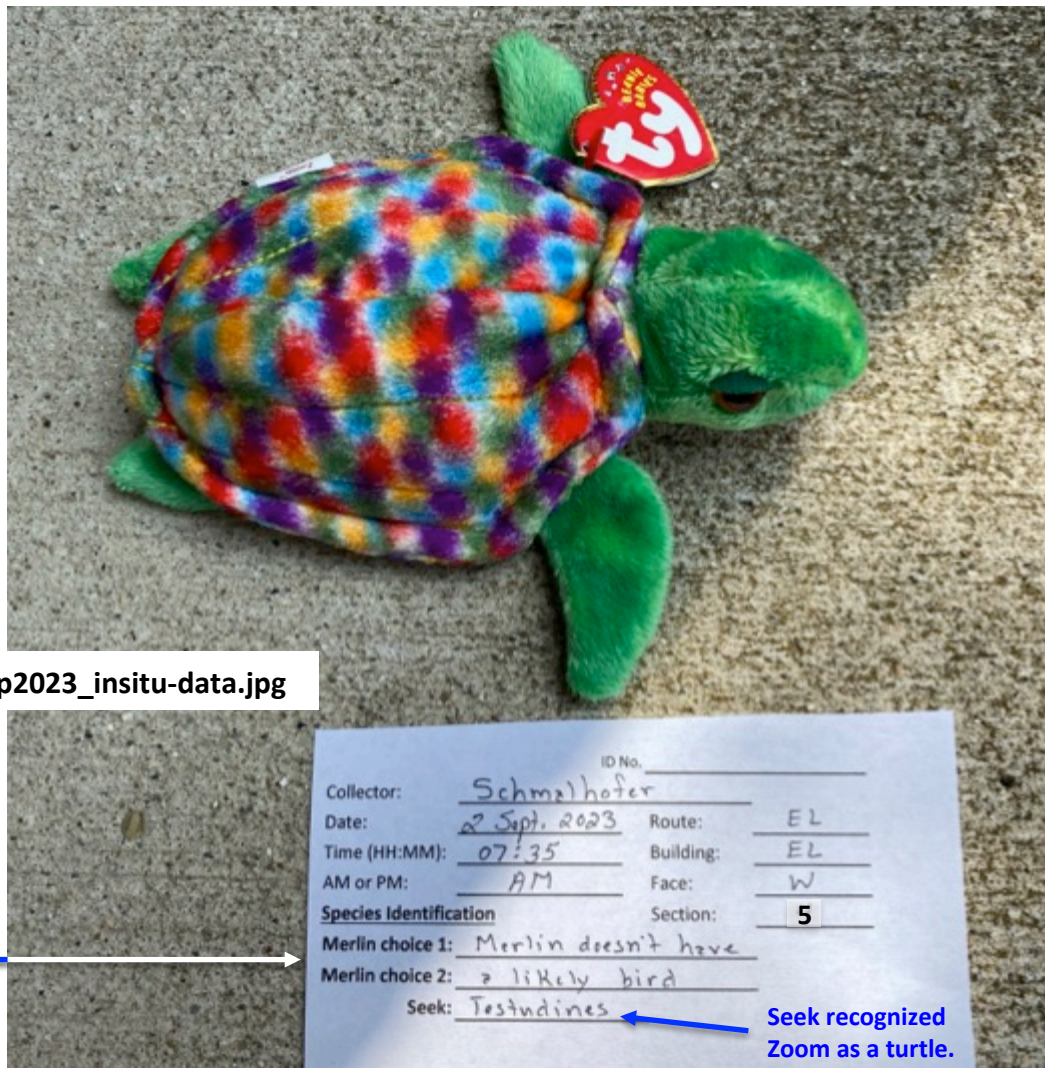Fill in the specimen ID card.

Merlin first !!!

Seek second !!!

Place the specimen card next to the bird and photograph it.

File name:

Schmalhofer_EL_W-5_2Sep2023_insitu-data.jpg

Merlin will admit when it can't identify something and will tell you that "Merlin doesn't have a likely bird."

Specimen ID card:

ID No.		
Collector:	Schmalhofer	
Date:	2 Sept. 2023	Route: EL
Time (HH:MM):	07:35	Building: EL
AM or PM:	AM	Face: W
Species Identification		Section: **5**
Merlin choice 1:	Merlin doesn't have	
Merlin choice 2:	a likely bird	
Seek:	Testudines	

Seek recognized Zoom as a turtle.

Bird Identification

First, identify the bird using Merlin.

Next, identify the bird using Seek.

Seek will tell you what it thinks the bird is.
Merlin provides possible options.
List the first and second choices that Merlin provides.

You can scroll through all the Merlin choices if you like, to help develop your own birding skills.

I don't want your identification when using Merlin being influenced by what Seek said.

If you have different identifications for the bird when using Merlin and Seek, that is ok.

Photograph 3: building photograph

Place a pink marker flag next to the bird.

> When possible, stand the flag next to the bird. You will be able to do this if your bird is on grass, soil, mulch, etc.

> If your bird is on pavement, lay the flag next to the bird.

Back up and take a photo of the bird in association with the building.

The purpose of this photo is to provide a visual record of where (approximately) the bird struck the building.

It's alive! Photographing live (but injured) birds.

We want to avoid stressing the bird any more than it is already stressed.

Do not approach too closely if the bird is obviously alert and aware. Use the zoom feature on your camera to take a photograph of the bird from a distance.

Use a pink marker flag so the bird's location can be found again easily.

Place the flag as near to the bird as possible; you'll come back and evaluate the bird's condition after you finish the rest of your route.

If the bird is stunned and appears unconscious, you can approach and take a normal photographs – but do not handle the bird!

Identify the bird using Merlin and Seek.

It is not always possible to photograph a live bird: it may fly away when you approach.

That's ok.
Take notes to provide a description as best you can.

Schmalhofer_IO_E-4_9May2023_live.jpg

Examples using actual birds from the Spring BWSP.

This bird struck the Library along the terrace connecting the Library to Business/SPEA.
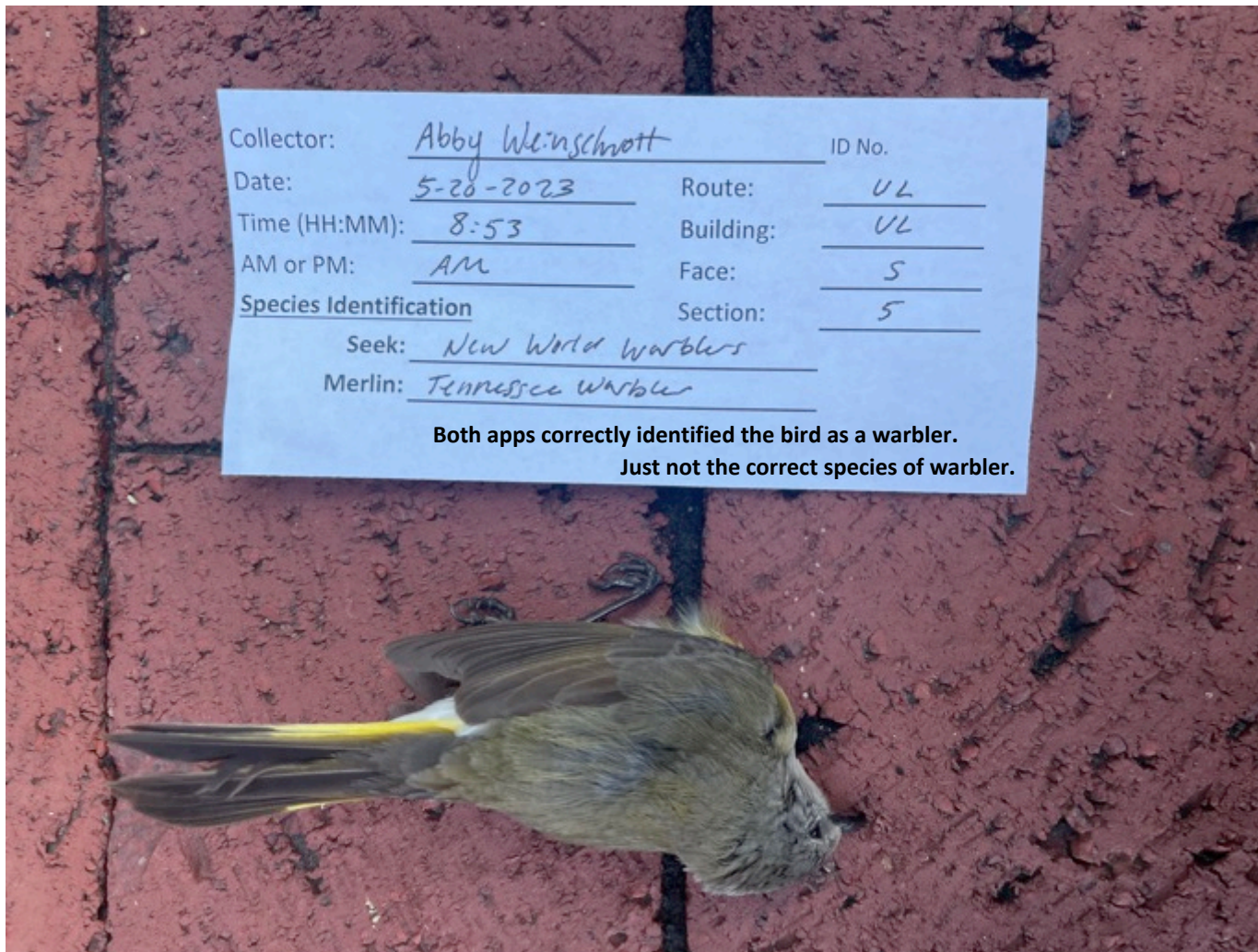

American Redstart (female)

Weinschrott_UL_S-5_20May2023_insitu.jpg

Examples using actual birds from the Spring BWSP.

Merlin and Seek both make mistakes. That is part of what we are evaluating.

Weinschrott_UL_S-5_20May2023_insitu-data.jpg

Examples using actual birds from the Spring BWSP.

From this photo, we can tell which window pane the bird most likely struck and precisely where on the south face of the Library terrace the collision occurred.

Without the specimen identification card, the bird would be difficult to see in the photo. This is why you'll use a pink marker flag in your photos. The flag won't blow away if it's windy.

Weinschrott_UL_S-5_20May2023_building.jpg