

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?



Many people are confused by or concerned about *Invisible Barn*. Here's a typical comment we received from a worried citizen in response to a recent article about *Invisible Barn*:

I wish you had interviewed someone involved with the “folly” to get a comment on how many birds will fly into the walls and die, or maybe it'll be deer that break their necks, before the folly of this project becomes clear.

One of the great powers of art is that it can act as a magnifying glass for thought. Bird-glass collisions are a serious problem: the leading cause of migratory bird death behind habitat loss. Yet, we build structures with glass windows or even complete glass exteriors in bird habitat and flyways every single day without thought or comment.

Because *Invisible Barn* is art rather than a real building, it makes us think differently and ask the questions we should really be asking about everything we do: why are we doing this? Is there a better way? I have heard questions about bird strikes on *IB* at least a dozen times since the installation was announced in spring 2015. Yet, after over a dozen years at Sagehen, no one has ever asked about the effect on wildlife of a new or pre-existing building. In fact, people seldom ask this question about buildings anywhere. I wonder if those expressing concern about *IB* have ever written an impassioned note about bird strikes to an urban construction company?

The fact that Invisible Barn triggers this kind of interest is one of the main reasons we built it: we want people to think more deeply about their relationship to—and feelings about—their environment.

In the face of changing climate and growing population, how should we be managing our wild places and built areas?

Since we are completely transparent in our operations at Sagehen, we were able to think about and respond to this issue in the planning stages of the project. We mist-netted during breeding season last year to be sure the site was not a flyway (it's not: we only caught—and released—one woodpecker). We also prepared a whitepaper on bird-glass collision mitigations and discovered that, unlike window glass, aluminum reflects UV light in the range that birds can see. Knowing this, we selected aluminized mylar as the surface material. For this reason, the structure should be highly visible to birds. To them, it likely appears similar to a big flower.

You can learn more about the bird-glass collision issue at FLAP.org. Read more about *Invisible Barn* in media outlets like the *Daily Mail*, *Arch Daily*, *Psychology Today*, *New Scientist*, *UC Natural Reserve System News*, and other links available on our Facebook page (under the hashtag [#InvisibleBarn](https://www.facebook.com/InvisibleBarn)).

Thanks for your engagement and interest in our project!

Sagehen Creek Field Station
July 27, 2015

