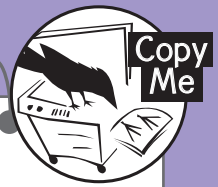




Instructions for Obstacle Course

- **WINDOWS:** Wrap the plastic wrap around the two chairs, making a “window.” Leave at least 18 inches between the bottom of your plastic window and the ground, so participants can crawl under the window.
- **TALL BUILDINGS:** Set up the hurdles or boxes with enough space in between for participants to step or jump over them.
- **BRIGHT LIGHTS and COMMUNICATION TOWERS:** Set up the traffic cones in a straight line with about two to three feet between each one. Place the blindfolds at the beginning of this part of the course, so participants can weave their way through the cones blindfolded.
- **GUY WIRES and POWER LINES:** Lay the heavy string, yarn, or rope out to make a grid two squares by five squares long. Each cell in the grid should measure no more than 15 inches on each side, so participants can step through each cell in the grid without touching the string or rope dividers.
- **SHRINKING HABITAT:** Place the hula hoops or loops of heavy string, yarn, or rope on the ground, leaving enough space between them so it is challenging—yet possible—for participants to jump between them. They can jump from one “habitat loop” to another, until they have been in all five loops.
- **TOXIC CHEMICALS:** Lay the plastic bags on the floor with about a foot in between them. Participants can jump over the plastic bags without stepping on the bags. Their feet may only touch the safe “uncontaminated” zones between the bags.
- **CATS:** Tie one end of the string to the body of the stuffed cat. Tie the other end to a piece of playground equipment or a pole fixed in the ground. If nothing else is available, tie the string to the end of a broom handle. Use tape or chalk to mark points where participants must step. When participants near this obstacle, swing the cat. Do not flail the cat wildly or try to hit the participants. Just let it swing gently. Participants must step on marked points while passing by the cat without getting hit.
- **EXOTIC SPECIES:** Place an extended rope or string on the ground. As participants travel the length of this rope, their feet must touch the rope with each step. A mis-step represents loss of habitat to an exotic bird species, introduced from another part of the world.



Obstacle Course Explanation

As you go through this obstacle course, imagine you are a bird trying to get safely through the day. Along the way...

WATCH OUT FOR WINDOWS! Many birds don't even see the window before they smack into it. The impact can injure or even kill them. Go under this window without touching it!

BE CAREFUL OF TALL BUILDINGS! With so many windows and so much surface area, tall buildings present quite an obstacle to flying birds. Leap over these tall buildings without hitting them!

DON'T GET CONFUSED BY THE BRIGHT LIGHTS—you might fly into something! Tall buildings, bridges, and communication towers are often lit up at night. Their bright lights can confuse birds, causing them to fly into these tall structures. With the blindfold on, you must weave between these towers. You may touch them, but don't knock any over!

LOOK OUT FOR THAT WIRE! Tall towers are often held up by heavy wires called "guy wires." Birds sometimes fly into these wires without seeing them, especially at night. The same thing can happen with power lines. Step in each of these spaces without touching the dangerous wires!

HUNT FOR YOUR HOME When people destroy or change the areas that birds rely on for wintering, breeding, and stopovers on their migration routes, fewer birds can survive. Some ways of farming, ranching, logging, and building houses and commercial buildings damage the forests, wetlands, and grasslands that birds use as their homes. Jump from one "habitat hoop" to another without touching the ground outside. Make sure you visit all the hoops!

WATCH WHAT YOU'RE EATING! Many birds get sick and die when they eat food that has been sprayed with chemical pesticides. Oil spills and poisonous wastewater are also big trouble for birds. Jump between these toxic areas without touching them!

BEWARE OF THAT CAT! Cats might be cute, but they also kill a lot of birds. Pass by this one carefully. Make sure you step where you need to, but don't let the predator get you!

CAN YOU COMPETE WITH THE EXOTICS? Exotic bird species, which people have brought from other parts of the world, can upset the balance in an ecosystem. Exotic birds like the European Starling are invasive and may try to use the same food, water, shelter, or space that local birds need to make a living. To get the habitat components you need before they are taken by exotic species, walk quickly on the rope or board. Be careful not to step off the rope as you travel from one end to the other.

FIND OUT YOUR FATE! Even if you have made it through all the obstacles so far, you still may not have made it safely through the day. Draw a Fate Card to see if you survived the day and arrived safely home.



Fate Cards



Your Fate...

Some of the seeds you ate today had just been treated with pesticides. Sorry, you didn't make it through the day.

Your Fate...

You flew right over a field that had just been treated with pesticides, but you didn't stop to eat. Congratulations, you made it through the day!

Your Fate...

You stopped by a bird feeder that was hung close to a bush where a cat was hiding. The cat caught you by surprise. Sorry, you didn't make it through the day.

Your Fate...

On your way through the neighborhood, you picked up a few seeds at a bird feeder in someone's yard. You saw a cat staring at you through the window, but the owners kept it safely inside the house. Congratulations, you made it through the day!

Your Fate...

A friend of yours showed up feeling sick. You think you may be coming down with what he's got, and you're pretty sure it's something like a deadly virus. Sorry, you didn't make it through the day.

Your Fate...

You had a close encounter with a car speeding by on the highway, but with some skillful flying, you avoided a collision. Congratulations, you made it through the day!

Your Fate...

While you were flying over the local marsh, a poacher shot you. Even though it's not hunting season, you still didn't make it through the day.

Your Fate...

While you were flying through the neighborhood after school, some children shot at you with a slingshot. Fortunately, they missed you—and you heard their parents yelling at them as you flew by! Congratulations, you made it through the day!

Following Up

Bird Hurdles

What Did You Learn?

1. Which human-caused dangers to wild birds do you think people can do more to reduce? How?
2. Why is reducing human-caused bird deaths important to those who want to protect birds?

Wanted: Your Feedback

1. How well do you think the obstacle course helped participants understand the threats to wild birds?
2. What seem to be the main points that participants learned?
3. What would you change if you were to create this obstacle course again?

Question for Reflection

Many scientists believe that the release of carbon dioxide and other gases resulting from humans burning fossil fuels (oil, gasoline, and coal) is resulting in global climate change. How do you think this warming of the Earth's climate will affect birds?

