



Winging It: A Brief History of Humanity's Relationship with Birds

Exhibition on view from June 19 to September 27, 2025

Humans have long had a complex relationship with birds. Whether denounced as pests, exploited as resources, or celebrated as icons of natural beauty and bellwethers of ecological health, birds have been a source of meaning, inspiration, and action for humans across eras and cultures. In Summer 2025, the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, will illuminate this complex history through a free exhibition documenting human-avian interactions from the 1500s to present.

The Newberry, founded in 1887, is one of the world's premier independent research libraries. Free and open to all, it fosters a deeper understanding of our world by inspiring research and learning in the humanities and encouraging conversations about ideas that matter to diverse audiences. This mission is rooted in a growing and accessible collection of rare and historical materials spanning more than six centuries of human (and bird) experience.

Winging It: A Brief History of Humanity's Relationship with Birds will draw on the Newberry's extraordinary collection and key loans from Chicago institutions such as the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum to highlight two enduring themes in how humans view their relationship with birds: Production and Protection. At the same time, it will foreground historical figures who bridged these themes in unexpected ways and speak to contemporary issues, such as the conservation of the Prairie Chicken and the loss of wetland and grassland habitat. The project is curated by Bob Dolgan, a lifelong birder and documentarian known for the films *Monty and Rose* (2019), *The Magic Stump* (2022), and *Fluddles* (2023). Based on previous exhibitions of similar size, we anticipate that *Winging It* will draw upwards of 10,000 attendees and catalyze public dialog as well as scholarly research on how humans think about and interact with birds in daily life, both past and present.

We are now seeking financial support to bring *Winging It* to life. The project is expected to cost \$25,000 and, as a free initiative, will depend entirely on the generosity of donors. If you are interested in contributing to or sponsoring *Winging It: A Brief History of Humanity's Relationship with Birds*, please reach out to Sierra Salinas at salinass@newberry.org.

While all contributions are welcome, any gift of more than **\$250** will result in:

- Name recognition in the exhibition gallery and in the Newberry's Annual Report.
- Personal tour of the Newberry and the exhibition with the curator.

Gifts of more than **\$2,500** will result in all of the above and:

- Year-round benefits and special invitations to Newberry events

Gifts of more than **\$10,000** will result in all of the above and:

- Lead sponsor recognition for the exhibition

Gifts must be received by March 1, 2025, to receive recognition in the gallery.

**Please notify us of specific questions, or if you prefer to remain anonymous.*