



Sunday, November 19, 2023

Letter to IEC

Reducing bird deaths by turning off lights during migration

Recommendations

Councillor Dianne Saxe recommends that:

City Council direct the City Manager to resume the cost-saving and bird-life-saving practice of turning off unnecessary lights on city property during bird migration seasons.

Summary

Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) Canada is a registered Canadian charity widely recognized as the pre-eminent authority on the bird-building collision issue. As FLAP has documented, artificial light from buildings and cityscapes endangers birds, especially during migration season. Many species of birds migrate at night, using light from the moon, the stars, and the setting sun to navigate. The bright lights of urban areas confuse these birds and pull them out of their way.

Especially on foggy or rainy nights when the cloud cover is low, birds fly at lower altitudes and are more likely to be disoriented by city lights. They may be pulled down into downtown mazes, where they often collide with buildings.

Also dangerous are floodlights, lighthouses, and airport ceilometers (light beams for measuring cloud altitude). Once birds are attracted to a light source, they tend not to leave it, and may become trapped until they die.

The City of Toronto used to have a program to turn off lights in city buildings at night during migration seasons, in order to reduce energy costs and reduce bird deaths. This program has fallen into disuse. CREM agrees that it should be resumed.

Councillor Dianne Saxe

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