

2023.IE9.10 - Reducing Bird Deaths by Turning off Lights during Migration_Lenka Holubec_City Council meeting on Nov 29, 2023

Nov 29, 2023

VIA Email: Email: iec@toronto.ca

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RE: 2023.IE9.10 - Reducing Bird Deaths by Turning off Lights during Migration_Lenka Holubec_City Council meeting on Nov 29, 2023

Dear Chair McKelvie & members of the Infrastructure & Environment Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on 2023.IE9.10 - Reducing Bird Deaths by Turning off Lights during Migration

As a member of [ProtectNatureTO](#), I have commented over the years on a number of issues from a perspective of the long-term conservation of Toronto's natural heritage in a context of implementation of protection policies adopted by the City Council and where biodiversity/climate crises lens is critical for successful survival of the species, ecosystems and sustainability.

Recommendations:

1.

This is to support Councillor Dianne Saxe recommendation 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.**

2.

Further, I would like to encourage **this motion be expanded to fully embrace the scope and ambition of "Lights Out Toronto" (LOT) - a public awareness campaign to promote migratory bird awareness in the City and the danger that buildings and lighting pose to the birds launched in 2005** [Preventing Migratory Bird Deaths Resulting from Collision with Buildings, December 21, 2005](#).

It is **critical to address both daytime and night time collisions** concerning both **the city buildings (public sector)** to ensure that all City-owned buildings minimize the number of migratory bird kills and **also the existing buildings (commercial sector)** by following a set of bird-friendly policies and/or practices that the City could encourage and/or require existing building owners to adopt in order to minimize the number of migratory bird kills.

Today, when our growing city is mounting even more challenge to birds migration and conservation, while we are acutely aware of rapidly progressing biodiversity decline and climate change, the motion by Councillor Dianne Saxe is a much needed step in a right direction.

Sincerely,

Lenka Holubec, member [ProtectNatureTO](#)

Background:

City adopted motions, guidelines

[Preventing Migratory Bird Deaths Resulting from Collision with Buildings, December 21, 2005.](#)

[City of Toronto's Migratory Bird Policies – Bird Friendly Development Guidelines](#) March 6, 2007

[2017 Best Practices Effective Lighting is a companion book to BIRD-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES](#)

[Bird-Friendly Guidelines](#)

[MM31.22 - Officially Recognizing Toronto as a Certified Bird Friendly City - by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Jennifer McKelvie](#) April 7, 2021

[Creating Bird Friendly Cities: A Path to Protect the Future of Our Feathered Friends, May 7, 2021, Nature Canada](#)

Research

Toronto is playing a pivotal role in North America migratory birds annual stopover location because of the Lake Ontario proximity and being at the right location between winter and summer nesting and foraging grounds: ***“The diversity and abundance of birds that continue to migrate through Toronto means that the City has both an opportunity and a responsibility to support the safe passage of these birds”***

[Migratory Birds in the City of Toronto, A Literature Review & Data Assessment, FINAL REPORT August 2009 DOUGAN & ASSOCIATES](#)

[Nearly 3 Billion Birds Gone](#) the first-ever comprehensive assessment of net population changes in the U.S. and Canada reveals across-the-board declines that scientists call “staggering.” Common birds—the species that many people see every day—have suffered the greatest losses, according to the study. More than 90% of the losses (more than 2.5 billion birds) come from just 12 families including the sparrows, blackbirds, warblers, and finches.

In the news

[Almost 1,000 Birds Died in One Night From Striking a Chicago Building](#)

Another 1,000 were killed in window collisions across the downtown area, amid calls for more bird-friendly architecture and reduced light pollution

October 10, 2023

[1,000 Birds Dead in One Night After Colliding with a Single Chicago Building](#)

American Bird Conservancy Calls for Action to Prevent Record Number of Bird Deaths

Most people may assume birds can cope and fly away right after a collision. However, birds often end up sustaining unseen serious injuries such as bruising, eye ulcers, and fractures that prevent them from continuing their journeys. The good news is, people can help. Given the loss of nearly 3 billion birds in the U.S. and Canada since 1970, ABC is encouraging the following solutions to help birds survive and thrive:

Tell your legislators to support the Federal Bird Safe Buildings Act. Take action now.

Learn what other simple actions you can take to prevent bird collisions both at home and in your community.

[Hundreds of migrating birds die after crashing into Chicago buildings](#)

Experts say almost 1,000 birds were involved in shocking incident during major migration in the area
Mike Bedigan Los Angeles Saturday 07 October 2023

“Reports from the area indicate that large numbers of birds died in collisions while major migration was occurring in the area.

“Although details are still emerging, this event appears to be a combination of high-intensity migration, adverse weather conditions for flying, and light and glass – a mix we know too well can be deadly.”

The organisation also urged “all businesses, building owners and private residences, as well as operators of any illuminated structures, to heed lights-out warnings for non-essential lights to be turned off during the migration season.”

The American Bird Conservancy estimates 1 billion birds a year die from colliding with glass, with window strikes known to be an issue in almost every major US city.

Birds do not see clear or reflective glass and do not understand it is a lethal barrier. When they see plants or bushes through windows or reflected in them, they head for them, killing themselves in the process.

Birds that migrate at night, like sparrows and warblers, rely on the stars to navigate. Bright lights from buildings both attract and confuse them, leading to window strikes or birds flying around the lights until they die from exhaustion — a phenomenon known as fatal light attraction.