



Louisville, Kentucky. Photo by Joshua Michaels on Unsplash

LIGHTS OUT

The Issue

Every spring and fall, billions of birds migrate between their breeding and wintering grounds, and most migrate at night. Along the way, they encounter numerous threats, many of them man-made.

Artificial lights from buildings can be fatal to migrating birds. Some become casualties of nighttime collisions with windows and building exteriors. Others grow disoriented and circle in confusion until dawn, when they land and face other urban threats. And the “sky glow” that artificial lighting creates often obscures the moon and stars, which act as birds’ natural navigation aids.

The Impact

This issue impacts hundreds of species, including threatened and endangered species. The Smithsonian estimates 300 million to 1 billion birds are killed annually due to collisions with artificially lit buildings. Another recent study suggests, in the U.S. alone, that number could be 1.92 to 5.19 billion, with potentially billions more worldwide.

This research documents the magnitude of the problem—but it also presents an important part of the solution: turning out unnecessary lights.

Lights Out is a national effort to solve this issue. Organizations,

including the Louisville Audubon Society, partner with building owners and managers and residents to turn off unnecessary lights when they are most likely to impact migrating or nocturnal birds.

The Benefits

- Minimize unnecessary bird deaths and injuries.
- Save money by reducing your building’s energy usage.
- Support your organization’s sustainability goals.
- Get recognized for sustainable, bird-friendly practices.
- Be seen as a regional and national leader in sustainability and bird conservation.

Solutions

You can help make buildings safer for birds: Reduce all unnecessary lighting, prioritizing exterior decorative lighting and lighting in upper stories.

Quick tips:

- Turn off or reduce decorative lighting.
- Extinguish spotlights and floodlights.
- Substitute strobe lighting where possible.
- Reduce lobby and atrium lighting wherever possible.
- Turn off unused interior lighting and pull window coverings if people are working after sunset.
- Down-shield exterior lighting to eliminate all light directed upward as well as horizontal glare.
- Install motion sensors and automatic controls wherever possible, indoors and outdoors.
- For outdoor lighting, choose warmer tones (less than 3000K).

Timing

Light-induced collisions can occur at any time of the year, but they spike in our area during the spring and fall, when most birds migrate over Louisville. Because migrating birds can be active throughout the night, unnecessary lighting should be reduced or turned off for as much of the nighttime as possible during peak migration periods.

WHEN TO GO LIGHTS OUT IN LOUISVILLE:

- Peak migration months:** • April through May
• September through October
- Peak migration times:** 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.