

## Please Help the Birds – it's Simple!



Did you know that listening to bird songs can improve your sense of well-being? They are a connection for us to the natural world and provide an enjoyable interest and pastime for people of all ages. The West Hartford Garden Club has supported birds and the pollinators whose caterpillars feed their babies through our community gardening outreach. Now we are also supporting the [Lights Out Connecticut](#) program to protect our birds when they migrate.

***Peak migration times - where conditions for birds are critical - are April 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>, and August 15<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 11 pm and 6 am.***

Please sign this [Pledge](#) to turn out or turn down your outside lights starting this year between 8/15/23 and 11/15/23. Please insert “**West Hartford Garden Club**” in the space allotted for your group or organization.

According to [Yale's Peabody Museum](#), 421 birds are native to Connecticut. Of those, there are 175 species that nest in Connecticut, and 55 of these remain through the winter. The rest migrate. ***At peak migration times, there can be ¼ to ½ million birds migrating per day.*** Don't hear them? 80% are migrating at night and at high altitudes. Why at night? Due to lower temperatures, better airflow and air patterns, and the ability to stay away from their predators – many of which migrate during the day.

Many birds migrate through Connecticut from summer stays in the rich, dense forests far up in the north, and many migrate as south as to the Caribbean and Argentina for the winter. A typical migration journey is around 1700 miles. Many birds are small and weigh very little – many as little as the weight of 10 pennies – and their migration journey is often flying 2 to 3 full days *straight*. That's a tremendous journey for such a small creature!

Before long migration journeys, birds need to bulk up – some as much as double their weight. Their migration path often takes them straight over the ocean, from far north down to South America, at night, using cues from the natural environment such as the moon, rising and setting of the sun, the earth's magnetic field, the winds, and constellations to guide them.

Unnatural lights at night during migration can confuse birds, causing them to lose their way and waste the vital energy that they've built up in preparation for their long journey. They might not be able to make their journey and can end up dying.

Another hazard that can be a cause of death for our feathered friends is flying into glass windows. Window collisions are one of the biggest causes of bird deaths in North America, according to [CT Audubon Society](#): in the United States alone, it is estimated that an average of 100 million to 1 billion birds are killed due to window collisions each year (Loss et al. 2014).

Studies have shown that turning off ½ of our lights during peak migration periods reduced bird collisions by 60%. And a 2021 study showed that even reducing lighting in one building, *not even a whole complex or town*, and/or addressing glassy windows/buildings can reduce the number of bird deaths.

***How difficult is it to change your lighting to help reduce bird deaths? Pretty easy!  
Especially during peak migration periods:***

1. Re-evaluate your true lighting needs and turn off what you can.
2. Indoor lighting is impactful, but evaluating and reducing outdoor lighting during peak migration periods is crucial.
3. Lighting (especially outdoors) should be facing downwards.
4. Steer away from blue-light LED lights which can negatively impact birds. Studies have shown the blue light of LED also interrupts the natural circadian rhythm in humans (there is blue light reduction technology to help reduce the negative impact for humans).
5. The warmer the light the better – for LED, aim toward amber-colored lighting.
6. Aim for 50% reduction in typical light intensity.
7. Try using a timer for lighting – set the timer to have outdoor lighting go off at night during peak migration periods.
8. Use motion detection lighting or smart technology lighting so it turns on as needed as opposed to staying on all night.

To ease window collision deaths, if you have a lot of glass or windows in your house or office building:

1. You can buy decals or film to put on windows to reduce glare.
2. Steer away from building large windows or walls of windows if you are constructing a house or building.
3. If you see buildings with many windows, speak to the owner or manager of the building about the concern to see what can be done to improve the hazard to our feathered friends.
4. Note: lots of or intense lighting in buildings with many windows, is a double threat to our feathered friends, especially during peak migration periods. So, during these times it is even more critical in these buildings to use adjust lighting using some of the techniques noted above.

Connecticut is the fourth state to enact a bill for birds, and our state has some of the strictest light laws in the U.S., but the laws aren't enforced.

**Thank you for anything you can do to help our feathered friends!**

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**Interesting in learning more? Here are some additional helpful resources:**

- [www.lightsoutct.org](http://www.lightsoutct.org)
- [Sample letters to neighbors, building manager about adjusting lighting](#)
- [Passed Connecticut House Bill \(HB\) 6607](#) – regulates outdoor lighting at state buildings year-round.
- [Dark Sky Reserve](#) (Maine)

- [American Bird Conservancy](#)
- [Yale Bird Collision Studies](#)
- [“How Do I Protect Birds”](#) booklet.
- [Reducing Collision with Glass](#)
- [“Losing the Dark”](#) – a 6-minute film on light pollution.