

Anne Lewis, FAIA
President, City Wildlife, Inc.
in **support of the**
Maryland Bird-Safe Buildings Act - SB 299
MD General Assembly
Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Anne Lewis, and I am President of City Wildlife, a non-profit organization in the District of Columbia whose mission is to protect wildlife. I am also an architect. We run the *Lights Out DC* program, a program to study bird/glass collisions in downtown DC. Since 2010, our volunteers have documented more than 3,000 bird strikes in a small downtown area, about 85% of which were fatal. After picking up the dead birds, we then photograph them and donate their carcasses to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center for research.



Part of an annual bird collision count
City Wildlife, Inc.
Washington, DC

The birds we find are overwhelming neo-tropical migrants -- beautiful birds -- many of whose populations are in serious decline. Bird/glass collisions are one of the most significant sources of fatality for these valued and dwindling species. And the strikes take a human toll, too. Two years ago at a DC elementary school, 53 Cedar Waxwings collided with glass along a corridor over a period of several days during their spring migration. The teachers said the children were so traumatized that they had to be kept away from the corridor because it upset them too much to see the birds hitting the glass and dying on the ground. Many adults have told me,

too, how upsetting it has been to see a bird hit a window -- and sadly, it is a universal experience.

After 5 years of monitoring, we met with the owners and managers of our most problematic buildings to ask them to remediate this problem. In 2016, one of these, the Washington Convention Center, installed bird-safe film at its L Street glass overpass, a feature that was killing many birds. The results have been dramatic: to date, we have seen an 88% reduction in bird strikes at this overpass. What's more, the film is nearly invisible.

The District Department of Energy and Environment is addressing this serious environmental problem by adding two optional bird-safe building credits to its Green Construction Code. These credits are based on the LEED Pilot Credit 55, and will apply to all construction covered by the Green Construction Code. These credits have been widely supported in our community. There are simple and effective means of reducing bird/glass collisions through design, and -- especially if included during the initial construction phase -- do not need to add any additional cost to the project. Moreover, the lighting reductions that are part of all bird-safe standards can significantly reduce energy costs.

The DC Court of Appeals, which now dims its atrium lights during migratory seasons, has reduced its atrium lighting costs by 15%. And the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building now dims its atrium lights at night all year, for a lighting cost reduction of 28%. Energy reduction will be influenced by the efficiency of the current light fixtures: the more inefficient the existing fixture, the greater the energy reduction by dimming. But even with efficient fixtures, such as the those at the DC Court of Appeals, the savings can be substantial even if the lights are only dimmed four months a year. And many buildings will see that dimming the lights all year can produce even greater savings with no loss of safety or functionality.

We are thrilled that Maryland is considering this legislation and strongly support its passage. Establishing requirements for state owned or operated buildings first is highly effective , since it sets an important and highly visible standard for private construction to follow.

I am pleased to have been able to come today to support this important bill and would be glad to provide any information that might be helpful about our bird-collision data or experiences.

Respectfully submitted,
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