



Planning Commission Approves New Bird-Safe Standards for San Francisco Buildings

MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Robert Johns, 202-234-7181 ext.210, [Email click here](#)
Mike Lynes, 510-843-6551, [Email click here](#)

(Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, CA., July 14 2011) American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and Golden Gate Audubon hailed the passage by the San Francisco Planning Commission of new Bird Safe Building Standards Thursday evening by a 5-1 vote. The standards would greatly reduce bird deaths and injuries resulting from collisions with buildings in the city. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors is expected to consider the proposal at its August or September meeting.

“In considering city-wide building standards to protect birds, the San Francisco Planning Commission is showing national leadership on this tragic wildlife issue. American Bird Conservancy is pleased to have partnered with Golden Gate Audubon to provide expertise to help develop this very forward-thinking and wildlife-friendly approach to a problem that is plaguing cities today – how to prevent up to one billion birds from dying each year in building collisions nationwide,” said Dr. Christine Sheppard, manager of ABC’s Bird Collisions Campaign.

“Bird deaths from building strikes, one of the main causes of bird mortality in the U.S., can often be prevented with reasonable, affordable measures. The City of San Francisco can take a bold and positive approach to the problem by adopting the Standards for Bird Safe Buildings that will identify hazards and reduce bird collisions.” said Mark Welther, Executive Director of Golden Gate Audubon.



Millenium Tower, San Francisco by Hydrogen Iodide

ABC’s Deputy Director of Conservation Advocacy, Anne Law, testified on Thursday, July 14, 2011 at the hearing in favor of the proposal, saying “Building collisions is one of the greatest man made killers of birds. We believe that the San Francisco Bird-Safe Building Standards will prevent hundreds of thousands of needless bird deaths and make San Francisco a leader in the global effort to reverse trends of increasing bird mortality that are causing bird populations to decline. The push to make buildings greener has ironically increased bird mortality because it has promoted greater use of glass for energy conservation, but green buildings don’t have to kill birds. Constructing bird-friendly buildings and eliminating the worst existing threats requires imaginative design, and recognition that not only do birds have a right to exist, but their continued existence is a value to humanity.”

The San Francisco Planning Commission voted on the 38-page “Standards for Bird Safe Buildings” which included sections on safer windows, night lighting, and the construction of wind turbines in the urban environment.

Reduction of bird strikes with new buildings can be achieved with simple and cost-effective means. For example, fritting – the placement of ceramic lines or dots on glass – is often already used to reduce air conditioning costs by lowering heat gain in window. If fritting is applied in particular patterns, it increases the visibility of the window to birds and reduces the likelihood of impacts with little effect on the transparency of the glass, so it does not affect views or light passing through the window for people.

The guidelines also address the effects of light pollution, which can confound birds' ability to navigate by the stars during migration. Lighted buildings and towers can draw birds off course and result in exhaustion, injury, or death for millions every year. The guidelines would reduce unnecessary interior and exterior lighting during the bird migratory seasons, reducing risks to birds.

Bird-safe measures often have other benefits for building owners and operators. For example, fritting reduces heat gain through windows and decreases cooling costs. Turning off unnecessary lights can save owners and operators thousands of dollars a year while greatly reducing risks to birds.

The guidelines split parts of San Francisco into "Blue" and "Green" zones, depending on the degree of risk new projects in those areas may pose to birds. Compliance with the guidelines will be mandatory in Blue Zones, which are located near bird nesting and feeding sites, in fog-prone areas, along migration paths and resting areas, or in districts that are zoned to allow tall buildings. In lower-risk Green Zones, the guidelines will provide voluntary options for reducing risks to birds.

"There already are a number of buildings in San Francisco, such as the San Francisco Federal Building and the De Young Museum, that are, albeit unintentionally, already bird-friendly. Where new construction is concerned, the bird-friendly options need not be more expensive, since bird safe materials and designs can be incorporated from the beginning," Sheppard said.

While San Francisco is looking at this issue on a local level, Illinois Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) has introduced national legislation (HR 4797) that calls for each public building constructed, acquired, or altered by the General Services Administration (GSA) to incorporate, to the maximum extent possible, bird-safe building materials and design features. The legislation would require GSA to take similar actions on existing buildings, where practicable. The terms "bird-safe building materials and design features" are defined through reference to several publications addressing those topics.

"Protecting and helping birds is not only the right thing to do, it is also good for the economy and the future of our environment. Birds are invaluable as controllers of crop insect pests and as pollinators of plants, seed distributors and they also generate tremendous economic revenues through the pastimes of bird feeding and birdwatching," said Sheppard.

A recent federal government study reports that over 20 percent of the U.S. population – 48 million people – participates in birdwatching, spending about \$36 billion annually in pursuit of their pastime. Copies of the proposed guidelines are available online [by clicking here](#).

[Click here to learn more about bird collisions with buildings!](#)

Golden Gate Audubon (www.goldengateaudubon.org) is dedicated to protecting Bay Area birds, other wildlife, and their natural habitats. We conserve and restore wildlife habitats, connect people of all ages and backgrounds with the natural world, and educate and engage Bay Area residents in the protection of our shared, local environment. Golden Gate Audubon is an independent, nonprofit organization with its own membership, budget and programs.

#

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization which conserves native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas by safeguarding the rarest species, conserving and restoring habitats, and reducing threats while building capacity in the bird conservation movement.