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**Making St. Louis safer for birds:  
St. Louis Audubon Society looks to partner with local businesses**

**VIDEO NEWS RELEASE HERE: <https://youtu.be/XCeIVyugVu0>**

**St. Louis, MO. (April 13, 2021)** – St. Louis can be dangerous for birds. A recent study from Cornell Lab ranked St. Louis the 5th most dangerous city during the spring migration. Light pollution and transparent or reflective glass paired with vegetation poses a challenge for birds. Vegetation is attractive for birds for rest and foraging. They can be confused by bright lights and “skyglow” as they migrate. Glass is not seen as a barrier, so they can try to fly through transparent glass or fly to reflected trees or vegetation. This often leads to collisions, injury and, unfortunately, sometimes death.

St. Louis Audubon Society (SLAS) is promoting two programs, Lights Out and BirdSafeSTL designed to help birds be safe. Lights Out deals with light pollution by asking businesses and homeowners to reduce the amount of light pollution, helping birds navigate safely during migration. BirdSafeSTL involves bird mortality surveys during spring and fall migration, focused in the downtown St. Louis area. These identify birds dying during migration periods and what areas are associated with the highest number of fatalities and injuries. SLAS and partners can work towards applying mitigations to keep birds safe once those problem areas are identified.

Businesses that want to partner with SLAS are asked to turn off or modify artificial light at night to provide migrating birds with safe passage between their nesting and wintering grounds. The Lights Out Heartland campaign periods are May and September – the peak migratory months of the year for our region. Five important steps for businesses and building managers (especially between midnight and sunrise) include:

1. Turning off unnecessary exterior and interior lighting (especially near the tops of buildings),
2. Putting necessary indoor and exterior lighting on timers or use motion sensors,
3. Making sure external lighting is down shielded,
4. Dimming or extinguishing lobby or atrium lighting,
5. Blocking indoor lighting that can be seen from the outside, especially near the top of building, by drawing shades or closing blinds.

Homeowners can also help by following some of these principles and asking the following questions:

1. Does the light serve a clear and necessary purpose?
2. Does the light fall only where needed?
3. Is the amount of light appropriate for the intended task?
4. Is the light connected to active controls like switches, timers, or motion sensors?
5. Is the light source “warm” in color? (kelvin ratings should be less than 3000)
6. Am I using Dark Sky IDA-certified lighting?

Reducing light pollution and bird death is beneficial for both birds and people. We can save energy and money and reduce our overall carbon footprint by carefully applying the right type of light only where needed and when needed. Birds often consume insects that we consider pests and can protect both us and the plants that insects can damage. Their presence can indicate a healthy environment, and their absence can indicate there are problems in the environment that can affect us too.

Billions of birds migrate north in the spring or south in the fall every year. St. Louis contains important green spaces, like Tower Grove Park and Forest Park that birds need to rest and refuel as they wing their way north or south. Some birds end up landing in highly developed areas such as downtown, and there they rely on smaller green areas and parks next to these buildings to forage, before they resume their migration flight. The city is also home to many of our year-round resident birds such as Northern Cardinals and chickadees that rely on the resources that can be found even in our urban areas.

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### **About the St. Louis Audubon Society**

St. Louis Audubon Society’s (SLAS) mission is to create a community connection to nature through education and conservation. This is done by supporting birds and their environments, using education to help us all understand the importance of birds and nature in our world. Programs like the Bring Conservation Home project encourage homeowners to plant natives that support wildlife in their yards. Lights Out and BirdSafeSTL projects help to keep birds safe, and bird walks introduce people to birds, how to identify them, and how to enjoy bird watching in many different environments. SLAS’s Community Science projects like Climate Watch help scientists understand how birds may respond to climate change. St. Louis Audubon Society also works with partners to advocate for issues that protect our environment and allow birds and humans to thrive.



*Lights Out Heartland is a partnership between International Dark Sky Missouri and the St. Louis Audubon Society.*