

*Wildlife Damage Management, Internet Center for  
Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP)*

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University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Year 2000

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Bright Lights, Big City, Dead Birds

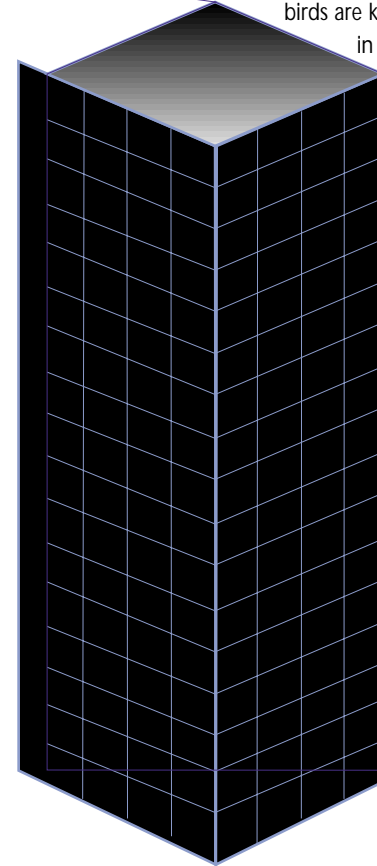
**BRIGHT  
LIGHTS,  
BIG CITY,  
DEAD  
BIRDS**



**Fatal  
Lights**

Hundreds of species of birds migrate at night. If the skies are clear and their path is moonlit these migrants will often fly at high altitudes avoiding any possible obstructions. But the lights of 20th century society can be confusing to them, especially on foggy, rainy nights or when cloud cover is low. Then they may fly directly into tall lighted structures such as skyscrapers, transmission towers, monuments, light-houses and the like. Where spotlights are shone into the night sky the birds fly "into" the light and become "entrapped", unable or unwilling to fly out again. Eventually, exhausted, they fall to the ground. Some birds are killed outright. Others are stunned and will revive in a couple of hours. Those birds that survive collisions with office towers clustered in a city's downtown core find themselves trapped in a maze of brightly-lit, reflective buildings. Their chances of survival are slim. Feral cats, rats, gulls and other animals learn to take advantage of this easy food source. When people appear on the scene, the disoriented migrants panic and try to take cover in the nearest tree or shrub - whether it's behind a wall of glass or reflected in it. Those birds that do not die upon impact will go into shock, easily falling prey to scavengers or being crushed by unsuspecting feet.

**At the  
flick of  
a switch  
you can  
help save  
their lives**



*I wish to become a member of FLAP and help save migratory birds.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov./State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**FLAP** members receive two issues per year of the newsletter *Touching Down*.  
**Annual membership fees for Fatal Light Awareness Program:**  
Regular \$10\_\_\_ Corporate \$100\_\_\_ Student/Senior \$5\_\_\_ Donation\_\_\_\_\_

## What you can do to help

### FLAP to the rescue

The Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP), a registered charity, was formed in April 1993 to find a solution to the problem. FLAP volunteers patrol the financial district of Toronto picking up live birds for release into their natural habitat or, when necessary, for transport to rehabilitation centres. They also document the number of deaths and collect dead birds as specimens for accredited institutions. But even more important is the other role of FLAP: to publicize the problem and get tenants, cleaning crews, security and management of the office buildings to turn off the lights or otherwise control the escape of light from the buildings.

For its conservation work FLAP has received international media attention, most notably coverage on CBC's "The Nature of Things", BBC Radio, the Discovery Channel, the Wall Street Journal and Radio Australia. FLAP is bringing its expertise to concerned groups in other North American cities to help them minimize the problem in their hometowns. Besides experimenting with other solutions to night and day-time collisions such as window film, FLAP is working to make sure that designers, architects, and engineers are aware of the issue and take it into account when designing, building or retrofitting structures.

First and foremost, if you work in an office tower, turn off the lights and close the blinds when you leave for the day. Ask your co-workers to do the same. Speak to cleaning staff about the problem. Urge building management to participate in the Bird-Friendly Building (BFB) program developed by FLAP and World Wildlife Fund-Canada. The BFB program is designed to help office towers reduce and ultimately eliminate the escape of light from their buildings at night.

FLAP recognizes that changing habits or retrofitting buildings takes time but turning off lights has myriad environmental benefits: energy savings, decreased light pollution and a decrease in CO2 emissions.

If you see a bird crash into a window at home or the office, pick it up gently and place it inside a brown paper bag in a warm, dark, quiet place. Do not handle the bird any more than absolutely necessary. Make sure that the bird is sitting upright to aid normal respiration. If the bird is tilted onto its side, make a donut out of a piece of tissue and sit the bird inside it. Call a local wildlife rehabilitation centre or humane society for further instructions. They

may wish to examine the bird for injuries or, if the bird is obviously alert after an hour inside the bag, they may ask you to release it in a treed area outside the city core.

To enable FLAP to keep complete records we ask that anyone finding birds that have hit windows in built-up areas in Toronto or elsewhere please contact us with the bird/location/date of pick-up. If you have access to the Internet, visit our web site at [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org) and fill in the data sheet.

Finally, by making a donation and becoming a member of the Fatal Light Awareness Program, you can help find solutions to this global problem.

### Losses we can ill afford

As of 1997 FLAP members had collected 126 different species of birds in Toronto alone, with over 8000 individual birds picked up in the four years since the organization was formed. These are just the birds that we see; many more are never retrieved. Multiply these numbers by the number of metropolitan areas in North America and it becomes clear that this is a problem of massive proportions.

Most of the migratory birds hitting lit structures are under tremendous pressure just to survive. Habitat loss on wintering and breeding grounds, increased predation, pesticides, parasitism by cowbirds and other factors are contributing to persistent population declines in many of the bird species that FLAP volunteers pick up. White-throated Sparrows, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Wood Thrushes, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Baltimore Orioles and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are just a few of the species felled by lit office towers. And yet, this particular problem is such an easy one to solve. **Just a flick of the switch** can prevent this wasteful loss of life.

The Fatal Light Awareness Program gratefully acknowledges support from:

**BRITISH AIRWAYS**  
The world's favourite airline



**FLAP**

FATAL LIGHT AWARENESS PROGRAM

65 Front St. W., Suite 0116-207  
Toronto, Ontario Canada M5J 1E6

Web Site: [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org)

Tel: (905) 831-FLAP

Charitable #14074 6736 RR0001

