

# Dim the lights, save the birds: US conservationists

September 22 2010

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A general view of the New York City skyline in March 2010. New York's lit-up skyline, which brightens the nocturnal cityscape delighting residents and tourists alike, is a menace to migrating birds, say ornithologists calling for the lights to be dimmed.

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Bird lovers said illuminated buildings confuse [migrating birds](#), who find it hard at night to distinguish between bright electric lights and those of the celestial variety.

During their spring and fall migrations, birds are mostly nocturnal travelers and tall buildings make it difficult for them to chart their

course.

"At night, birds use the moon and the star map as a compass," said Dr Susan Elbin, [ornithologist](#) and director of conservation for the New York City Audubon society.

"When the sky is overcast or the moon is new, strong artificial lights coming from the city will distract them," she said.

"Any kind of deviation from their flight pattern could mean that the [birds](#) get exhausted and crash into something. Or they may just wind up fluttering, waiting to recover, and then take off into a glass pane reflecting the sky," Elbin said.

The Audubon Society is asking New Yorkers to turn off their lights at night during peak migration season, from September 1 to November 1.

It is the fifth year that Audubon has made the request of city officials and residents, and the group boasts a growing list of participants.

Buildings agreeing to hit the dimmer switch this year include some of New York's most iconic, including the Time-Warner Center, Rockefeller Center, and the Chrysler building.

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