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ATLANTA RANKS HIGH IN BUILDING COLLISION RELATED BIRD DEATHS

(Atlanta, Ga.) April 8, 2019 – Atlanta ranks high in the number of building collision related bird deaths, according to a recently released study by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During fall migration, Atlanta ranks number four. In the spring, Atlanta ranks number nine for collision-related deaths. Atlanta Audubon is studying bird-building collisions and taking steps to reduce bird fatalities through its Project Safe Flight Atlanta and Lights Out Atlanta programs.

The Cornell study ranked metropolitan areas where, due to a combination of light pollution and geography, birds are at the greatest risk of becoming attracted to and disoriented by lights and crashing into buildings. The research was published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. It combines satellite data showing light pollution levels with weather radar measuring bird migration density.

Chicago, Houston, and Dallas ranked one through three during both fall and spring migration. Because many birds alter their migration routes between spring and fall, rankings of the most-dangerous cities change slightly with the season, according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During spring migration, billions of birds pass through the central U.S., so cities primarily in the middle of the country comprise the most-dangerous list for that season. Fall bird migration tends to be intense along the heavily light-polluted Atlantic seaboard, which is why four eastern cities make the list in autumn. Atlanta ranks fourth in the fall and ninth during spring migration.

Each year, an estimated 365 million to 1 billion birds die in the U.S. after colliding with buildings. In Atlanta, **Project Safe Flight Atlanta** volunteers patrol selected routes during peak bird migration periods collecting birds that have died or been injured after colliding with buildings. Since the program began in 2015, volunteers have collected more than 1,200 birds of 100 different species.

In an effort to reduce the number of bird-building collisions, Atlanta Audubon launched the **Lights Out Atlanta Program** in spring 2017. A voluntary program, **Lights Out Atlanta** encourages building owners and residential homeowners to turn off or reduce lighting from midnight to dawn during peak bird migration periods. Participants pledge to reduce non-essential lighting during peak migration periods of March 15 to May 31 (spring) and August 15 to November 15 (fall). The pledge is available on the Atlanta

Audubon website at www.atlantaaudubon.org/loa. Since Lights Out Atlanta launched in spring 2017, nearly 300 homeowners and 16 commercial properties have pledged to turn the lights out to help birds.

“We were saddened, but not terribly surprised when we received a call from Cornell letting us know about this study and sharing that Atlanta ranks high in the number of bird-building collisions,” says Adam Betuel, Director of Conservation for Atlanta Audubon. “The Atlantic flyway is a major migration path for many birds, and millions of birds pass through Atlanta each spring and fall on their way to and from wintering grounds in South and Central America. We hope to use this data to help us enact meaningful programs, like our Lights Out Atlanta Program, to reduce the number of collisions and educate the public about ways they can help. Cornell estimates that a quarter-million birds die from collisions with houses and residences each year, so homeowners in the metro area can play an important role through simple steps, like turning out the nighttime lights during spring and fall migration.”

For more information on Project Safe Flight Atlanta and Lights Out Atlanta, please visit www.atlantaaudubon.org/project-safe-flight-atlanta or www.atlantaaudubon.org/loa.

Atlanta Audubon Society is building places where birds and people thrive. We create birds -friendly communities through conservation, education, and advocacy.

Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y3l9s32oktcs94e/AADL4n1VHbxzzwGhN455VJ-fa?dl=0>.

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