

Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment

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A Reward for Bird-Friendly Buildings

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Librado Romero/The New York

Times



Green buildings usually conjure images of super-efficient, high-tech constructions, not stunned or dead birds. Unfortunately, some of the buildings that rate highest in energy efficiency and other green factors are also among the biggest bird killers.

Expanses of glass strategically placed to make the most of the sun's light and heat are invisible to birds. Rain gardens and trees planted around green buildings attract birds and make collisions more likely. As many as one billion birds die in building collisions in the United States each year.

While cities like San Francisco and Chicago have developed guidelines for creating safer cities for birds, bird-friendly attributes are also now getting attention from the [United States Green Building Council](#)'s [LEED](#) certification program, the nation's standard setter for green construction.

Thanks to a campaign by the [American Bird Conservancy](#) and the [Bird-Safe Glass Foundation](#), builders and designers will soon be able to earn credit toward LEED certification by featuring design elements that mitigate feathered fatalities.

The credit is being tested by the program's Pilot Credit Library to make sure that it is effective before it becomes part of the permanent LEED guidelines.

To earn the credit, buildings must comply with one facade requirement, one interior light requirement and one exterior light requirement and develop a monitoring program.

The facade requirement focuses on the creation of "visual noise" to help birds distinguish inviting sky from unwelcoming wall by the making glass less reflective and more textured and/or opaque.

The lighting requirements can be met through actions as simple as turning off all the interior lights in a building at night or making sure that exterior lights are not angled up into the sky.

About 42,000 commercial buildings are already participating in the LEED program, according to Christine Shepherd, the American Bird Conservancy's bird collisions program director. "We're hoping that this credit will bring international attention to, and action on, this issue," she said.

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