

THE ST ND RD

WINDOWS – WHAT A PANE!

Posted by Tamara | Mar 18, 2021 | Columns, Geoff Carpentier



Ever since European settlers occupied North America, our influences on avian populations have varied between positive and devastatingly negative. I would love to just write about the good stuff, but there is an important issue which needs to be discussed; windows and how they can be deadly to birds!

A new grass roots organization has been founded by a friend of mine, Pearl Shore, who has spent her life caring about wildlife and the environment. The organization she founded is called Bird Safe Buildings Across Canada (BSBC). Their website is www.birdsafebuildings.com.

Pearl shared her thoughts on its origins. BSBC was born from a single event. Coming out of the subway at Finch and Yonge Street in Toronto, in the fall of 2018, she saw a pair of dead Golden-crowned Kinglets, which had just hit the reflective windows at the Manulife building. She picked up their still warm bodies and took them home to her freezer.

She already knew about the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP – www.flap.org) which is dedicated to safeguarding migratory birds in the built environment through education, policy development, research, rescue and rehabilitation.

But she needed to learn more about these daytime strikes with reflective and transparent windows, so she did the research, learned from experts, and so her appetite was whetted. But what could she do? Well, anyone who knows Pearl knows she wouldn't simply stand by and say "what a shame." She would do something to make a difference!

As she learned about the seriousness of millions of birds colliding with windows across North America, and bird deterrent markers could be applied to existing windows to prevent the vast majority of these needless deaths, she decided to do more.

She attended a webinar, with Future Ground Network, at the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF), and found talented and intelligent individuals who wanted to work with her on this important conservation project. Sheri Ellenberger, along with Ariel Greenblat and Pearl began a journey to share information about bird window strikes and how to prevent them. They also wanted to encourage large commercial establishments, existing along migratory pathways, to upgrade their buildings to save thousands of birds at skyscraper hot-spots. Part of their motto reads "BSBC aims to educate the public on the issue and to encourage change in troublesome structures, both residential and commercial, until every building in Canada is bird safe."

Their first campaign: encourage Toronto Dominion Bank in Toronto (anchor tenant of TD towers) to work with Cadillac Fairview (owners of TD towers) and the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (owners of Cadillac Fairview) to apply bird saving window treatments to their high-collision facades, which can help save hundreds to thousands of birds from fatal strikes with the towers each year.

According to her, these buildings are considered to be one of the worst complexes for bird collisions in Toronto, because of their reflective windows which confuse birds because they act as mirrors showing trees and habitat which isn't really there. This happens particularly in low light conditions, such that they fatally strike the glass. Despite the 2013 court ruling, in *Liat Podolsky ("EcoJustice") v. Cadillac Fairview Corp. et al.* which required them to retrofit another set of buildings in Toronto,

Cadillac Fairview has only applied bird deterrent markers to the TD linkway, but the remaining towers still need to be done.

Pearl relentlessly took them to task and forced them to reconsider their position, citing, in part, their own corporate documents which showed they cared about the environment. But did they?

People care and are listening to BSBC, as over 55,000 people have now signed their petition to encourage the owners and operators of the TD Towers to retrofit the necessary windows, so birds, including some species at risk, can be saved.

For the homeowner, BCBS also offers advice about bird deterrent markers which can be applied to troublesome windows and prevent birds from dying in our yards.

To find out if your home is likely to have bird strikes, visit www.birdsafe.ca which is another excellent source of information for homeowners who care.

Geoff Carpentier is a published author, expedition guide and environmental consultant. Visit Geoff on LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.

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