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Get Wild: Dim the lights for birds at night

Opinion [FOLLOW OPINION](#) | YesterdayMartie Semmer
Get Wild

The second World Migratory Bird Day of this year is Saturday, Oct. 8. The 2022 theme focuses on light pollution and how to minimize this threat to migrating birds: "Dim the Lights for Birds at Night!" It reminds the world that the approximately 2% per year increase of light pollution can be reversed.

"World Migratory Bird Day is a call to action for international migratory bird conservation. As migratory birds journey across borders, inspiring and connecting people along the way, it is our aim to use the two days in 2022 to raise awareness of the threat of light pollution and the importance of dark skies to bird migrations," said Dr. Susan Bonfield, the executive director of Environment for the Americas. She's a former long-term Summit County resident who escapes to the High Country whenever she can!

Based in Boulder, [Environment for the Americas](#) leads and coordinates World Migratory Bird Day activities in the Americas. Environment for the Americas joins the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement for two annual worldwide celebrations to emphasize the importance of helping birds during their spring and fall migrations.

Other organizations, including the National Audubon Society and the International Dark-Sky Association, support World Migratory Bird Day. The International Dark-Sky Association Colorado Chapter and Lights Out Colorado have joined international and national organizations to focus on how to minimize light pollution.



bodies of the natural night sky. Of the 70% of all birds that migrate, 80% of them migrate at night.

Several years ago, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology published a study documenting that 2.5 billion migratory birds have been lost in North America since 1970. More disturbing is evidence indicating that the decrease in bird populations is continuing to escalate throughout the world, including in Colorado and Summit County.

"Birds are indicators of the environment. If they are in trouble, we know we'll soon be in trouble." said Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996) an American naturalist and ornithologist.

Throughout Colorado including rural areas, the most important problem resulting from light pollution is "navigational disruption," which affects millions of birds each migration season, according to Richard O'Brien the Lights Out Colorado founder and International Dark-Sky Association Colorado communications coordinator. Navigational disruption causes migrating birds to fly off course, often leading to disorientation, building collisions, stress and exhaustion. Weakened birds are vulnerable to dangers that can lead to fatalities and extinction.

For more information, check out the following:

- [Colorado State University AeroEco Lab](#) for nightly migratory bird forecasts in Colorado at AeroEcoLab.com/colorado
- The [Summit County, Colorado – BirdCast Migration Dashboard](#) at Dashboard.Birdcast.info/region/US-CO-117
- The [Bird Migration Explorer](#) at Explorer.Audubon.org

Lights Out Colorado complements the 2022 World Migratory Bird Day slogan with the following guidelines:

1. Turn off unnecessary lights
2. Keep indoor lights indoors
3. Install motion sensors & timers to control light so it's turned off when not needed
4. Shield exterior lights so the light doesn't spill beyond where it's needed

Richard O'Brien provides a dire warning on the accelerating decline of bird populations in North America: "If this continues, we could have a bird-free continent soon."

Let's not allow this to happen. We can all work together to achieve the Oct. 8 World Migratory Bird Day's goal: "Dim the Lights for Birds at Night."



x



Martie Semmer

After a 2019 introduction in Westcliffe to the wondrous night sky, Martie Semmer, International Dark-Sky Association Colorado board member and western Colorado regional coordinator, remarked that the sky is the limit as she continues learning about and advocating for the preservation of the night sky. Contact Martie at summitdarksky@gmail.com.

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