



Bringing back the birds

December 15, 2016

Dear Friends,

Would you like to save money for your company? American Bird Conservancy is writing to the operators of tall communications towers to ask your help to conserve birds and reduce electric bills and operating expenses.

[New policies](#) put in place by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) encourage tower operators to adopt modern, bird-friendly, energy-saving lighting systems. A simple switch to flashing red or white lights saves birds and electricity, and still alerts pilots to the towers' presence.

American Bird Conservancy thanks the operators of the towers that have already switched their lighting to help reduce mortality of birds attracted to the tower lights. As of today, 723 tall towers nationwide have updated their lighting systems under the new guidelines. Making the switch reduces bird collisions by approximately 70 percent, and in the process saves energy and reduces operating costs.

Evidence indicates that birds, primarily songbirds migrating at night, are either drawn to or disoriented by steady-burning lighting systems on communication towers, especially when night skies are overcast or foggy. As many as seven million birds a year die in collisions with towers as a result in the U.S. Birds are not as likely to be attracted to and collide with towers lit with only red or white flashing lights. (Please visit ABC's website for more information about [communication towers and birds](#).)

[The new guidelines](#) explain how owners of towers taller than 350 ft. can use a fast and efficient series of easy steps to extinguish non-flashing lights. Beyond the benefit to birds, tower owners stand to gain from the switch because flashing lights greatly reduce electricity consumption and costs, as well as tower maintenance costs such as the labor and cost of changing bulbs. No tower climbers or fees are required to make the switch.

The FAA is actively encouraging owners of existing towers to extinguish non-flashing lights on all towers as soon as possible. "New tower lighting schemes should now follow the revised guidance, and operators of towers with the old lighting system should submit plans explaining how and when they will transition to the new standards," the agency said in a [news release](#).

The history of the new guidelines dates back to December 2011, when the FCC agreed on interim changes to their system for approving applications for new telecommunication towers. These changes came about because of a successful lawsuit by American Bird Conservancy and partners. [That case](#) resulted in a federal court of appeals ordering the Commission to carefully evaluate the potential adverse effects of communications towers on migratory bird populations in the Gulf Coast region during their tower licensing process.

In May 2012, the FAA published a report documenting that extinguishing nighttime non-flashing lights on communication towers would still maintain safety for aviators. This report led to the revised [FAA Advisory Circular \(AC 70/7460-1L\)](#), which requires all new towers taller than 350 ft. above ground level approved after Dec. 4, 2015 to use only flashing lights at night.

Thank you for considering this request to update your lighting system. For additional information, please contact me at 202 888 7490 or sholmer@abcbirds.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Holmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Holmer
Vice President of Policy
American Bird Conservancy