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**First-ever Conference for Bird-Friendly Buildings Announced**

The Chicago Department of the Environment, the Chicago Department of Planning and Development and the Chicago Ornithological Society are announcing *Birds & Buildings: Creating a Safer Environment*, a conference to educate architects and builders about the ways to make urban structures bird-friendly. This event will be the first public meeting anywhere to address the building design features that are associated with the deaths of almost one billion birds each year in the United States.

Sponsors for the March 11, 2005 conference are the Illinois Institute of Technology, The College of Architecture and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago, AIA Chicago, and BuildingGreen, Inc. Co-sponsors include the Bird Conservation Network, the Wild Bird Feeding Industry and National Audubon Society.

"In 2000 Mayor Daley signed the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds, formalizing the City's commitment to ensure that the millions of migrating birds that pass through Chicago each season have the best possible 'visitor' experience," explains Chicago Environment Commissioner Marcia Jiménez. "We launched the Lights Out program to reduce the artificial light that is known to be a significant hazard for birds. With the success of Lights Out, however, we can now see that there are additional urban obstacles for birds that must be addressed."

Randi Doeker, president of the Chicago Ornithological Society, reports that "birds simply do not understand glass or reflections. Birds only see the trees and sky reflected in windows, making collisions with windows the most significant, yet least recognized, cause of bird deaths. We are confident that architecture and building professionals will be able to design bird-friendly buildings once they understand the problems."

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“Bird-safe facades create all sorts of benefits for people as well as birds,” explains Ellen Grimes, Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “Many of the design strategies used to minimize bird collisions also minimize heat gain, creating energy savings and enhancing environmental conditions within and around buildings. You could say that smart bird-safe facades have a real payoff economically and environmentally.”

Chicago architect and conference advisor, Jeanne Gang of Studio Gang Architects, recently tackled the issue of bird-friendliness in the award-winning design concept for the Ford Calumet Environmental Center. “What occurs to me is that preventing bird strikes presents such an interesting problem to be solved, especially for younger designers who are very aware of the importance of habitats and wildlife. Since birds see differently than humans, the solution requires architects to re-examine what is meant by a bird’s eye view.”

“Death and injury to birds from our buildings is an important issue that is just beginning to gain attention from some in the building design and construction community”, states Alex Wilson, president of BuildingGreen, Inc. “This conference should be a landmark event both in generating awareness of this problem and in providing the latest information on how to design and operate buildings to protect birds.”

“Skyscrapers are one of Chicago's claims to architectural fame," said Charles Smith, president of AIA Chicago. "Today, architects are exploring ways to create environmentally-friendly buildings. By sharing knowledge at this conference, we will continue to lead and learn ways to build tall and build safely, for people and for the environment."

The one-day conference is being hosted by the Illinois Institute of Technology. Dean of the IIT College of Architecture Donna Robertson points out that "Mies van der Rohe's renowned S.R. Crown Hall, home for the IIT College of Architecture, is landmarked for many compelling characteristics demonstrating Modernism's innovations. However, the vaunted transparency of its window wall is beautiful but cruel when birds are tricked into thinking they can fly through the space. Thus, we are very pleased to have this conference to help us understand how the building designs can be bird-friendly rather than a threat. I look forward to the intellectual endeavors that will strengthen architecture's ability to harmonize the built environment with nature."

For additional information about the conference, visit the Birds & Buildings website at [www.birdsandbuildings.org](http://www.birdsandbuildings.org).

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