



*inspiring people to protect
Bay Area birds since 1917*

October 13, 2010

For Delivery by Hand and via Email

San Francisco Planning Commissioners
c/o: Ms. Linda Avery, Commission Secretary
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103-2414
Linda.Avery@sfgov.org

Re: Support for Standards for Bird Safe Buildings

Dear Commissioners;

I am writing on behalf of the Golden Gate Audubon Society and its more than 10,000 members and supporters in the San Francisco Bay Area to ask the Planning Commission to support the *Standards for Bird Safe Buildings* in San Francisco. Approximately 1 billion birds die in North America each year as a result of collisions, mostly with artificial structures such as buildings, towers, and bridges. This is an extremely significant contributor to the decline of some migratory bird populations and a threat to the integrity of biodiversity in North America.

The consequences of bird populations declines are being felt acutely in the Bay Area, especially in San Francisco. Where once the California Quail roamed the city by the tens of thousands, fewer than ten remain within Golden Gate Park. The White-crowned Sparrow is taken for granted as abundant and stable, yet data indicate it is suffering precipitous declines in San Francisco. Couple these losses of our resident birds with the ongoing declines of migratory birds—especially Neotropical migratory birds that winter in Mexico and regions further south and migrate through San Francisco each spring and autumn—and we are amidst an unprecedented loss of our natural history in the Bay Area. Indeed, the Audubon California 2007 Watch list identifies over 70 native bird species in decline in California, many of which rely on habitats found in San Francisco. With the increasing pressures of human population growth, continued urbanization and disturbance of natural areas, and climate change, stressors on bird populations are expected to intensify over the next several decades.

Thankfully, the Planning Commission has been supportive of bird-friendly measures in the past. In 2008, Commission supported the *Lights Out for Birds* program in San Francisco, making it the first city on the West Coast to implement a voluntary program of turning off unnecessary interior and exterior lights within the city, thereby reducing risks to migrating birds. Planning Department staff and Golden Gate Audubon representatives partnered on the Mayor's Task

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Force on Urban Wind to ensure that urban wind energy is developed in as bird-friendly manner as possible. Last October, the San Francisco Planning Commission invited Golden Gate Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy to present information on bird-friendly buildings.

The *Standards for Bird Safe Buildings* are based on scientific studies that document hazards for birds in the urban environment. The standards cover the topics such as lighting, glass treatments and choices, wind technology and other structural elements. They provide reasonable, affordably alternatives to conventional options that contribute to risks to birds.

We understand that there is often concern and resistance to change, especially when some perceive it as unnecessarily increasing the cost of development or doing business. However, we invite the Commission and all concerned to give the Standards a thorough and fair review, and to ask whether we can continue constructing buildings as we always have, with little or no regard for the wildlife that we harm in the process. San Francisco once again has the opportunity to be a leader for protecting biodiversity in the region and the West Coast, and we ask that the Commission seize it.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions about the threats to biodiversity, especially birds, that are addressed by the *Standards*.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Lynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Lynes
Conservation Director

cc: AnMarie Rogers, Manager of Legislative Affairs, San Francisco Planning Department