



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Legislators, Advocates Rename Statewide Bird Safe Buildings Act the “FLACO Act”

SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL February 26, 2024

| ISSUE: **BIRDS, WILDLIFE, LIGHT POLLUTION**



Senator Hoylman-Sigal, Assembly Member Kelles & Assembly Member Fahy Will Honor Flaco the Owl with a Renewed Push for Two Bills to Increase Protections for Birds

NEW YORK — Today, in the wake of the untimely death of Flaco, the Eurasian eagle-owl that captured the hearts and minds of New Yorkers upon escaping from the Central Park Zoo after an individual vandalized his enclosure, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (D/WFP-Manhattan) and Assembly Member Anna Kelles, along with New York City

Audubon and Audubon New York (the state office of National Audubon Society), are announcing a renewed push for two pieces of legislation that will make the skies safer for birds.

The Bird Safe Buildings Act, [S.7098/A.7808](#), will be renamed the FLACO Act (“Feathered Lives Also Count” Act) to honor the impact Flaco had on New York City. This law will require any new or significantly altered state buildings to incorporate bird-friendly designs, particularly in their windows. Nearly a quarter million birds in New York City, and more than one billion across the country, die each year from collisions with buildings. This number can be significantly reduced if buildings utilize bird-safe practices.

A second piece of legislation, the Dark Skies Protection Act, [S.7663/A5632](#) would significantly reduce light pollution in New York by requiring most non-essential outdoor lighting be covered by an external shield, be motion-activated, or be turned off between 11 PM and 5 AM. Around 80 percent of migrating birds move at night but light pollution can disrupt a bird’s natural sense of their environment, drawing them into urban areas and disorienting them, causing them to fly into buildings, windows, and other structures. Light pollution has also been shown to be harmful to human health and mental well being. The Dark Skies Act will help create a safer environment for birds by reducing the artificial light in our night skies.

Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said: “I’m gutted at the death of Flaco the owl, who delighted countless New Yorkers through his presence in Central Park. His death after apparently striking a glass window pane raises the importance of our passing common-sense laws to help stop preventable window strikes, which kill millions of birds, like Flaco, each year. By renaming our legislation to require state-owned buildings to incorporate bird friendly

designs, we'll not only honor this magnificent creature, but hopefully inspire our legislative colleagues to pass both the FLACO Act and the Dark Skies Protection Act.”

Assembly Member Anna Kelles said: “It was a heart-wrenching story to read about the death of Flaco the owl, most specifically because it was a senseless, unnecessary, and human-driven death. If we had simply taken the small effort to add window treatments to our buildings we could have prevented his death and continued our collective awe and hope that his freedom gave to us all. Collision into windows is the second greatest cause of bird deaths in the US, and it is completely preventable. Birds are absolutely essential for the integrity and health of almost every terrestrial ecosystem in the world and yet according to the American Bird Conservancy we have lost 25% of all birds in the world since 1970. We must stop this trend. In honor of the inspiration that Flaco brought to so many, renaming the Bird Safe Buildings Act the FLACO Act and prioritizing its passage in this year’s legislative session is truly the least we can do for these gorgeous creatures and our environment.”

Assembly Member Pat Fahy said: “I share New Yorkers’ sadness at the loss of Flaco the owl, and for the 1 billion birds in the U.S. and Canada and 230,000 in New York City we lose from preventable building collisions each year. While we don’t know if Flaco’s collision happened at night — we do know that the Dark Skies Act would help prevent many of them at night and reverse the troubling trends of bird species extinction and disruptions to migration patterns. Joyful memories of Flaco should serve as a call to action for New Yorkers from the Adirondacks to Long Island to better protect the biodiversity that stabilizes our environment and makes our ecosystem so unique by passing the newly-named FLACO Act and Dark Skies Protection Act.”

Jessica Wilson, Executive Director of NYC Audubon, said: “Birds are a critical part of a healthy ecosystem, and birds like Flaco remind us of the magic of these animals. The simple acts of turning lights off at night, and making windows safer for birds, will ensure a better

environment for birds and for people.”

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2023-S7098

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 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
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May 18, 2023

In Assembly Committee

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January 05, 2022

In Senate Committee **Environmental Conservation**

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