



Insects illuminated by the Luxor Skybeam, Las Vegas and a typical Olde English street light, with its dead insects!

### **Part A - Electricity and English songbirds, LA Times, 14 September 1897.**

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); September 14, 1897; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881-1986) pg. 7

Electricity and English songbirds:-

An English journal has become alarmed at the relation of electricity to songbirds, which it maintains is closer than that of cats and fodder crops. *How many of us, it asks, foresee that electricity may extirpate the songbird?* Yet, unless some unknown factor intervenes, the chain of cause and effect would seem to be far simpler than that of the cat that kills the field mice that would rifle the nests of the bumblebees that ought to fertilise the red clover. With the exception of the finches, all the English songbirds may be said to be insectivorous, and their diet consists chiefly of vast numbers of very small insects which they collect from the grass and herbs before the dew is dry. As the electric light is finding its way for street illumination into the country parts of England, these poor winged atoms are slain by thousands at each light every warm summer evening, battering themselves against the globes until the ground beneath is strewn with them. *The fear is expressed, that when England is lighted from one end to the other with electricity the song birds will die out from the failure of their food supply.* Americans have long been familiar with the destruction of insects wrought by arc lights in the warm months, but it is not on record that the naturalists in this country have given themselves any particular concern about it, or that it has reacted to any serious extent against any other part of the animal kingdom.

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Text provided courtesy of Dr Travis Longcore, from the Urban Wildlands Group, California USA.

See also –

Ken D. Frank, 1988 – Impact of Outdoor Lighting on Moths, J of the Lepidopterists' Society, 1988, Vol. 42  
[http://research.yale.edu/peabody/jls/pdfs/1980s/1988/1988-42\(2\)63-Frank.pdf](http://research.yale.edu/peabody/jls/pdfs/1980s/1988/1988-42(2)63-Frank.pdf)

Colin Henshaw, 1994 – The Environmental Effects of Light Pollution, JBAA, May, 1994  
<http://articles.adsabs.harvard.edu/full/seri/JBAA./0104//0000313.000.html>

RCEP: Artificial Light in the Environment, 2009 –  
<http://www.rcep.org.uk/reports/sr-2009-light/sr-light.htm>

# Part B - Is the 24 hour day killing off Life On Earth?

By Graham Cliff

It is time that we should be focusing attention on the harm done by the 24 hour day. Perhaps we should be concerned about how sustainable is our collective future? Medical evidence for this harm, which is being caused to human health, by light at night (LAN), is mounting. We are seeing melatonin suppression, caused by LAN, reducing our ability to fight cancer. Children, sleep deprived, are hypertensive, hyperactive and likely to succumb to obesity. <sup>(1)</sup> Emergency workers like doctors and nurses, who work overly long shifts, risk making poor decisions. Danish women have already been awarded compensation for shift work “causing” breast cancer (2009). The WHO (World Health Organisation, December 2007) has already declared that shift work is a “possible” carcinogen. And shift work is only possible with light at night, LAN.

The harm to both flora and fauna in the 24 hour day is also increasing. <sup>(2)</sup> It denies life its natural circadian rhythm, which apparently regulates ALL life forms on Earth. It is not just nocturnal creatures like bats which are suffering a decline. So too are sparrows!

Light at night sucks insects to their deaths. <sup>(2)</sup> Sparrow chicks need insects (just like bats) – without them the chicks just die. So then, we have light at night, insect decline, potential widespread species decline - all of which go hand in hand with the 24 hour day of the last 50 years! We have lived on the Earth with many other species for millennia. We have only had the 24 hour day for a few decades. Our own survival instinct, honed over (the same) millennia, is now killing us. <sup>(1)</sup>

More importantly, now that we have faced the Copenhagen climate change summit, we face a “just too late” scenario. The hidden harm of the modern 24 hour day has created that harm for over 112 years (at least according to the LA Times, 14 September, 1897).

It is tempting to draw parallels with other harms drawn from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly those of ionizing radiation, radioactivity, heavy metals, hydrocarbon carcinogens, smoking and asbestos. Once the harm has been done it cannot be repaired. I fear that the politicians of Copenhagen talked the talk in 2009 but that they are too scared to walk the walk. The harm has been done and cannot be undone : we face a purely palliative future now - on “good old” planet Earth, of which future populations will need between 5 and 23 to live that for which ALL humans drive, the “American Dream”, which, whatever that may be, is anything BUT sustainable?

Light pollution, making it impossible for anyone to see the Milky Way, may well be the least of our problems. <sup>(3)</sup>

References: -

- (1) “Lights Out”, Wiley and Formby, Pocket Press, Simon and Schuster, 2001 (354 pages) – [http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/offer-listing/0671038680/ref=ed\\_oe\\_p\\_olp](http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/offer-listing/0671038680/ref=ed_oe_p_olp)
- (2) “Ecological Consequences of Artificial Night Lighting”, eds, Catherine Rich and Travis Longcore, Island Press, 2006 (458 pages) [http://www.islandpress.org/bookstore/details.php?prod\\_id=213](http://www.islandpress.org/bookstore/details.php?prod_id=213)
- (3) “Blinded by the Light?”, CfDS handbook, 2009 (40 pages) - <http://www.britastro.org/dark-skies/handbook.html>

## Part C - Will Whip-Poor-Wills Die?

We have recently been reading that light at night suppresses melatonin production and may well be harming human health!

You will have also read on the web pages of my web site that light at night has many “hidden” insidious effects which are only now coming to light!

Did you furthermore know that nocturnal birds are in worldwide decline, perhaps because of the 24 hour day?

Light at night sucks their insect food supply from habitat areas and the 24 hour day destroys that night time habitat!

Whippoorwills in the USA,<sup>(1)</sup> night jars and the song thrush in Europe,<sup>(2)</sup> and even Masked Owls(?) in Australasia <sup>(3)</sup>!

They are all at risk. Perhaps **whip-poor-wills** will never again sing – they will just die?

Moreover you can read a CNN report, from Audubon, that COMMON backyard birds are becoming less common. <sup>(4)</sup>

***Is light pollution killing our birds? I think so – do you?***<sup>(5)</sup>

1) <http://www.massaudubon.org/whippoorwill/index.php?type=welcome>

2) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/mid/3568639.stm>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song\\_Thrush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Thrush)

3) <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/finder/display.cfm?id=58>

4) <http://www.cnn.com/2007/TECH/science/06/14/bird.decline/index.html>

5) <http://www.lightpollution.org.uk/dwnLoads/CliffSummer%202006.pdf>