



Release

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Brewer to City Hall: Postpone the Drones

Peak bird migration season is the wrong time for a drone show over Central Park

October 21, 2023—Council Member Gale A. Brewer called on Mayor Eric Adams to ground tonight’s Central Park drone show over ornithologists’ concerns that it will disrupt, injure, or kill thousands migrating birds.

As many as 10,000 birds pass through Central Park each night during fall migration season, experts say. Bright, darting drones threaten birds in several ways:

- Drones are perceived as avian predators, according to the Audubon Society. They can cause serious injury to birds that may divebomb a drone and make contact.
- Birds may be injured or killed in collisions with drones. The risk of aircraft colliding with birds jumps by as much as 400% during periods of migration, according to research from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
- Light pollution can change birds' migration patterns, foraging behaviors, and vocal communication. Bird fatalities are caused by the amount of energy the birds waste flying around and calling out in confusion. The exhaustion can then leave them vulnerable to other urban threats.

The drone show, titled [Franchise Freedom](#), is the work of Dutch artist collective DRIFT. They call it “an aerial drone performance exploring the relationship between man, nature and technology.” Artists [says it has long been their dream](#) to stage the show in Central Park.

In July, Mayor Adams [announced new rules](#) governing the take-off and landing of unmanned aircraft in New York City. *Franchise Freedom* would have been banned under the old rules.

The drone show comes one month after City Hall okayed the Global Citizen Festival on the Great Lawn despite heavy rain, leading to its [destruction and closure](#).

“The Central Park drone show will be just as good when peak migration is over,” **said Council Member Gale A. Brewer**. “I’m not opposed to drones when they are used appropriately, but flying 1,000 drones over Central Park during peak bird migration is a bad idea. *Franchise Freedom* appears to violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which prohibits the disturbance, pursuit, or harassment of migrating birds.”

“NYC Audubon’s bird collision research shows that artificial light produced by buildings and shows like these disrupt flight patterns and disorient migratory birds, contributing to the quarter of a million fatal bird strikes with buildings that tragically occur each year in our city,” said **NYC Audubon Executive Director Jessica Wilson**. “These deaths are preventable. NYC Audubon urges the City to take immediate action by canceling today’s drone show—and moving forward, to work towards a more sustainable future for our City’s birds and people by passing the City Council’s [‘Lights Out’ legislation](#) that would significantly reduce unnecessary artificial light pollution in our City.”