Media and the Environment

Assignment Number Two

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Dimming the Urban Glow

"Dim the lights for those in flight"

Our advocacy campaign, 'Dimming the Urban Glow,' aims to bring awareness to the adverse effects of light pollution and enact legislation to curb the unnecessary use of nighttime illumination in urban areas. 'Dimming the Urban Glow' will expose the profoundly detrimental impact of the seemingly harmless action of leaving unused lights on. Light pollution has severe consequences, and its solutions are highly underrepresented in the media. According to "The First World Atlas of the Artificial Night Sky Brightness," two-thirds of the world population and 99% of the EU and US, excluding Hawaii and Alaska, live in lightly polluted areas (NASA, 2020). Most citizens of wealthy and developed countries commonly misconceive energy waste as the most significant detriment of leaving the lights on. While this is an additional consequence, disruptions to our bird population, ecosystems, and even our health prevail as the more significant issues. Issuing a campaign through The National Audubon Society, an organization in charge of monitoring and protecting bird species in the United States, will educate the public on the dangers facing our bird populations and ecosystems. We plan on implementing three major parts in our campaign: achieving political change, spreading media advocacy, and brand partnership. Political advocacy and support are essential to the legislative component of this campaign. Through bill proposals and ratification, we will decrease corporate light pollution emissions. By rallying public support through media campaigning strategies such as commercials and social media advertisements, we will capture the attention needed to reach our 1-year goal of

decreasing light pollution in East Coast urban areas by 30%. Through mutually beneficial partnerships with motion-sensor light companies, this campaign asserts partnered companies' brand images as ecologically friendly. Brand partners of ‘Dimming the Urban Glow’ will aid green consumerism amongst the American middle class. We believe our goal of a 30% decrease is achievable with the proper level of government interaction, message circulation through the media, and brand partnerships. ‘Dimming the Urban Glow’ promises brighter days and darker nights.

Light pollution can be defined as the excessive, misdirected, or intrusive artificial light produced by human activities (National Geographic, n.d.). Light pollution can be categorized into four different types: glare, skyglow, light trespass, and over-illumination. Our campaign primarily focuses on over-illumination, which is the excessive use of light beyond what is necessary for specific activities. This issue has been mainly ignored by the legislature in most urban areas, unfortunately resulting in an increase of sky brightness by approximately 9.6% between 2011 and 2022 (NASA, 2020). Excessive and unnatural lumination has many adverse effects on our ecosystems and environment; it obscures the stars, affects the health of animals and humans, and wastes energy. More specifically, light pollution significantly affects the global bird population. Over-illumination comes primarily from streetlights, commercial properties, and residential outdoor lighting. For birds, this lighting throws off their natural circadian rhythms used for sleep, navigation, and migration. This disruption causes severe disorientation, collisions with buildings, improper migration patterns, difficulty interpreting seasons, and the inability to procreate (Science, 2019). There are seven species of birds currently near extinction in North America due to the disturbance of their natural migration and sleep cycles; these include the

Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, Greater Sage-Grouse, Streaked-Horned Lark, Western Snowy-Plover, Tufted Puffin, and the California Condor (Bird Alliance of Oregon, 2024).

Since 1970, the estimated bird population on the United States East Coast has lost approximately 3 billion, or 29%, of its bird population. In recent years, it has been estimated that approximately 300 million to 1 billion birds are killed annually due to collisions with artificially lit buildings. (Kane, 2016) Continuing this trend would have tremendous effects on our ecosystems, including decreased pollination and seed dispersal for vegetation, outbreaks of insect populations, and severe food web disruptions. Although birds are the main focus of our campaign, it's important to note that the adverse effects of artificial light reach into every layer of the ecosystem. It's been documented that prolonged exposure to artificial light affects our trees and vegetation, preventing them from adequately adjusting during the changing seasons (Science, 2019). Additionally, predators can take advantage of the lighter nights, extending hunting hours and causing diminishing populations of certain prey species. Through this, food chains and hibernation patterns of other species are also disrupted. We are not exempt from the adverse effects of light pollution. Recently, studies have produced results linking increased nighttime light exposure to decreased melatonin production, sleep disorders, and higher cancer risk (National Library of Medicine, 2009).

Although light pollution is a global issue, we have focused our campaign on the East Coast of the United States because of the increasing rate of light pollution per continent. Light pollution is growing globally at a rate of 6.5% annually, whereas in North America, it's increasing by 10.5%, far above the average (National History Museum, 2023). Additionally, North Americans are 50% less likely to be able to see the Milky Way, our home galaxy. In descending order, the cities with the highest levels of light pollution in the United States are

Charlotte, North Carolina; Detroit, Michigan; Miami, Florida; and Richmond, Virginia (Carter, 2021).

Led and founded in 1905 by Boston environmentalists Harriet Hemenway and Minna B Hall, The National Audubon Society was created to protest and combat the slaughter of waterbirds used as accessories on women's hats. In the decades that followed and today, the Society remains on the front lines of American conservatism, influencing policymakers to pass legislation that protects birds. The National Audubon Society's mission is to "protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation" (Audubon, 2024). The success of The National Audubon Society's efforts include the Audubon Plumage Law of 1910, which protected wading birds from the trappings of the plume industry, the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act—still one of the strongest bird-protection laws in the world today—that made it illegal to kill any non-game bird in the U.S., the Endangered Species Act in 1973, and the giant climate-change-focused Inflation Reduction Act in 2022. The 'Dimming the Urban Glow' Campaign for the National Audubon Society aims to highlight and fortify the company's simultaneous work with wildlife protection and ecological advocacy.

'Dimming the Urban Glow's' objective is to receive legal approval for the mandatory implementation of motion sensor lights in corporate office buildings along the East Coast. This is essential to the long-term goal of reducing light pollution in East Coast cities by 30% within 1 year of our program launch. The primary audience for this campaign is local government representatives, specifically mayors, governors, and senators in urban areas. These East Coast decision-makers can rectify light pollution issues in the areas that need reform the most. Our secondary audience is targeted towards local businesses, opinion leaders, and the general public,

who can help persuade lawmakers. With that in mind, advocacy demonstrated through organized direct action is imperative to the success of our campaign. To accomplish the campaign's objective, 'Dimming the Urban Glow' will encourage public participation, lobbying, and publicized education through The National Audubon Society.

Several modes of advocacy can be utilized for the 'Dimming the Urban Glow' campaign. This campaign intends to connect the legal initiative with the communal. A main component of the campaign will be introducing the 'Adopt a Bird' feature on the Audubon website, which allows those interested in taking action against light pollution to do so. 'Adopt a Bird' will offer individuals to sponsor a bird from an endangered species, with the proceeds going towards the funding of an anti-light pollution bill; the bill will be proposed to government officials such as Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles and Detroit Mayor Bill Duggan, who will in turn send this bill higher up. This bill will push the implementation of anti-light pollution motion detecting lights in vast urban and corporate workplaces. It is essential in this campaign to connect the community with the legal, as multi-faceted and multidisciplinary approaches to advocacy will reap the best results.

To advocate for 'Dimming the Urban Glow' in the media, we will create an Audubon radio and television commercial that explains the issues the bird population faces due to over-illumination and light pollution in urban settings. During this brief explanation, we plan to appeal to the listener's logic and emotions using the rhetorical devices of ethos, logos, and pathos. Our ethos is established through the credibility of Audubon's brand and our logos through shared statistics on light pollution's contribution to the decreasing bird population. By adding credible facts about the ecological impact of over-illumination, our media campaign will create a sense of urgency amongst viewers. In this commercial, we will have the link to our

“Adopt a Bird” initiative, allowing the audience to engage with the campaign. This emotional bond will serve to further our pathos.

As referenced above, our campaign will foster partnerships with motion-sensor light brands to further the reduction of light pollution. ‘Dimming the Urban Glow’ allows brand enhancement for motion sensor companies, publicizing a positive environmental image by associating the company with impactful ecological practices. This green marketing strategy is a win-win situation as it will help assert these businesses' character as environmentally friendly while simultaneously making a meaningful change for the birds. Moreover, our campaign can encourage homeowners to participate in green consumerism by inviting them to purchase environmentally friendly products. Implementing motion sensor lights in big corporations will cause a trickle-down effect on smaller businesses and communities. If Wells Fargo is turning off their lights, we should be, too.

Other campaigns with similar aims and messages to ‘Dimming the Urban Glow’ have implemented efforts to reduce light pollution from an ecological standpoint. We have modeled aspects of ‘Dimming the Urban Glow’ from campaigns like ‘DarkSky International’ and ‘The Commission for Dark Skies.’ ‘DarkSky International’ works with governments and communities to check that outdoor lighting is sustainable and has a public initiative to inform members of the U.S. on how harmful excessive lighting can be for humans, animals, and the environment. The ‘Commission for Dark Skies: Protect the Night,’ a UK-based initiative, is also in contact with central and local governments, pushing them to consider the night skies. ‘Commission for Dark Skies’ works to monitor road lights and has been recognized by lighting manufacturers for their role in advocating for and implementing better lighting. These two initiatives have helped us form a framework and garner inspiration for ‘Dimming the Urban Glow.’

‘Dimming the Urban Glow’ sets out to decrease light pollution in the significant pollinator cities on the East Coast of the United States. This campaign targets corporate office buildings located in the downtown centers of each metropolitan area. It is essential now more than ever that the public challenges the status quo. The National Audubon Society can spark an ecological revolution by ensuring government officials pass our environmental advocacy campaign. By dimming the night sky, we can build a brighter future.

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