

Urge legislators to cut state carbon emissions

Thanks for reporting on the University of Massachusetts Amherst study, “Climate change puts songbirds at risk.” The study of how heat stresses songbirds reminded me of how heat stresses people: like birds, we overheat and die from heat stroke or, also like birds, we lose a lot of water to cool ourselves through evaporation and then die of dehydration. The article concluded with an important message: climate refuge may become increasingly important.”

Just today, I read a related article about the mayor of Los Angeles working with scientists and engineers to plan ways to lower the city’s temperature by 3 degrees — in other words, how to create refuge for city residents. They intend to use models to analyze neighborhoods, and the potential impact of different devices: “cool” roofs, reflective sidewalks, more trees. They found that landscaping with minimal irrigation can raise neighborhood temperatures by a few degrees because less water is available to cool the temperature down during the day. Different areas need different strategies. But dry soil and drought tolerant landscaping is needed to keep nighttime temperatures down.

The songbirds in the desert are our canaries in the coal mine. Please urge your state senator and state representative to support more legislation to cut state carbon emissions. State Senator Michael Barrett submitted a bill that is virtually identical to a national policy proposed last week by top senior Republican leaders. If Massachusetts enacts a revenue-neutral carbon fee and distributes all the revenue to residents, then maybe — as with previous important issues — Congress will finally have the courage to follow our lead.
Judy Weiss

Brookline

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