



FATAL ATTRACTION

# New York is dimming its lights to save migratory birds from crashing into buildings

By [Akshat Rathi](#) | April 28, 2015

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Pushed by climate change, then crashed into glass. (Sam Droege)

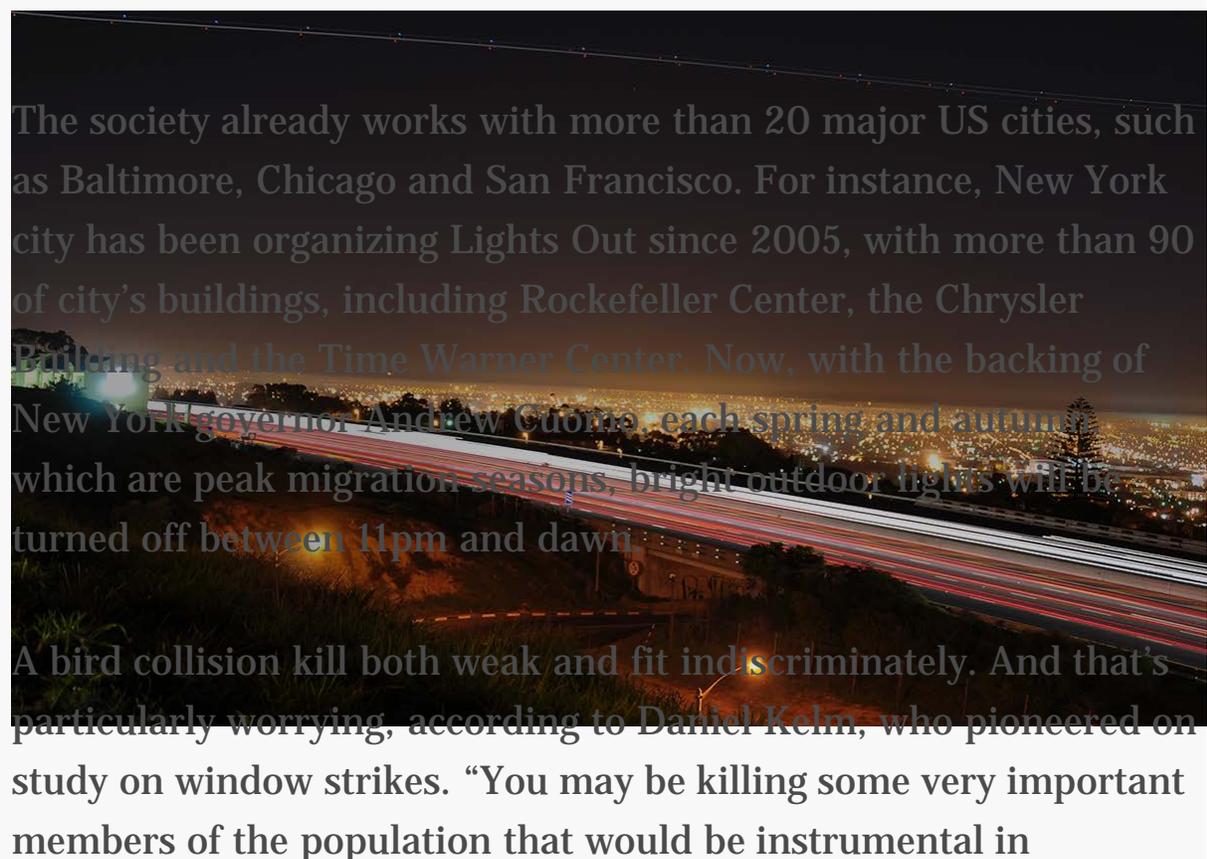
In a bid to save birds, the state of New York has decided to turn off unnecessary lights in its buildings. The hope is that migrating

birds, who use starlight for navigation, won't be distracted by shiny things and die by crashing in to glass buildings.

Migratory birds fly below 2,000 feet, and may be lower on rainy nights. The bright lights in glass buildings can cause disorientation, leading to what has been labeled “fatal attraction.”

Bird deaths due to collisions number in the **hundreds of millions** in the US alone, according to a 2005 study by the US department of agriculture. The issue has gained more importance since the launch of the **Lights Out program** more than a decade ago by the conservation non-profit National Audubon Society.

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The society already works with more than 20 major US cities, such as Baltimore, Chicago and San Francisco. For instance, New York city has been organizing Lights Out since 2005, with more than 90 of city's buildings, including Rockefeller Center, the Chrysler Building and the Time Warner Center. Now, with the backing of New York governor Andrew Cuomo, each spring and autumn, which are peak migration seasons, bright outdoor lights will be turned off between 11pm and dawn.

A bird collision kill both weak and fit indiscriminately. And that's particularly worrying, according to Daniel Kelm, who pioneered on study on window strikes. “You may be killing some very important members of the population that would be instrumental in

maintaining its health,” he [told the BBC](#).

Apart from dimming lights, there are other ways of cutting down bird deaths. Last month, Quartz reported on the work of Lights Out volunteers in Washington, DC and how better-designed buildings [could save these birds](#). For instance, take the Aqua Centre in Chicago, the 82-story building features balconies that interrupt its smooth, reflective surface and provide the birds a perch.

Recently, novelist and bird-watcher Jonathan Franzen, penned a [controversial article](#) for the New Yorker that criticized our focus on climate change instead of conservation. It was the bird-unfriendly design of a football stadium in Minnesota that got him riled up. The makers of stadium weren't ready to invest a small amount of money to alter their design.

Perhaps both environmentalists and Franzen will approve of New York state's decision to dim lights. It helps both reduce carbon emissions and save birds, in whatever small way.



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GLOBAL WARP TOUR

# Scientists are measuring the Nepal earthquake by bouncing radar beams off Kathmandu from space

By [David Yanofsky](#) | 2 hours ago |

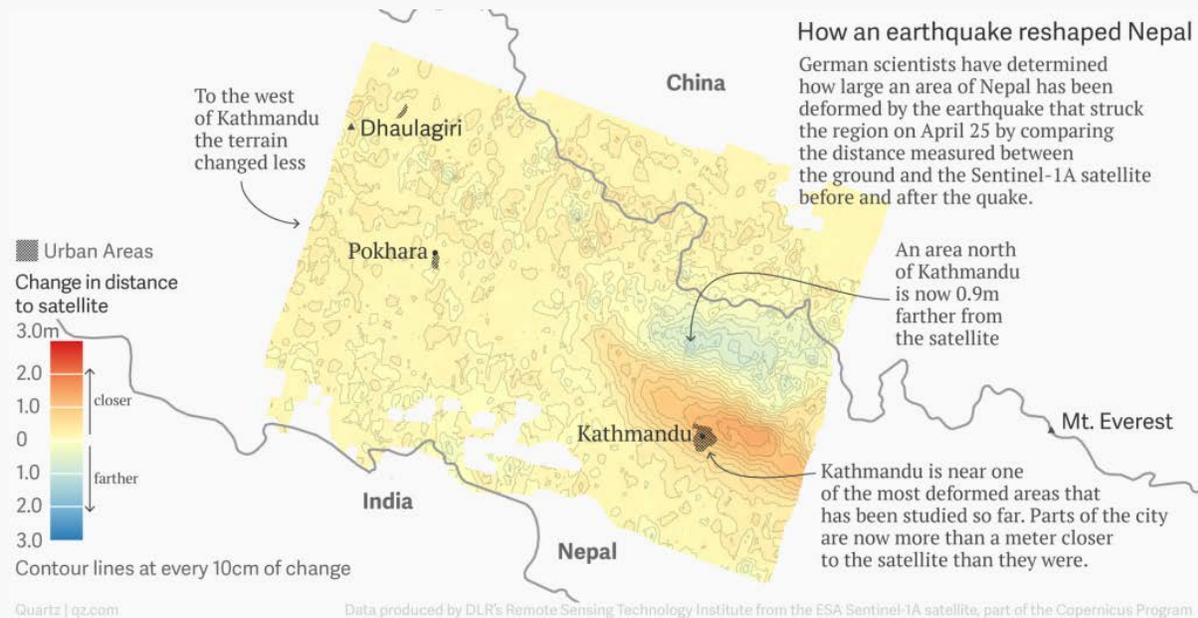
The ground has shifted beneath Nepal's feet, and space agencies around the globe are rushing to measure it. But they're not all hopping on airplanes to Kathmandu; many are simply downloading data collected in space.

Using satellites that bounce radar waves off the earth and listen to the echo, scientists are able to calculate the distance between those satellites and the earth. Comparing the measured distances before and after the earthquake shows how much the earth has changed

shape.

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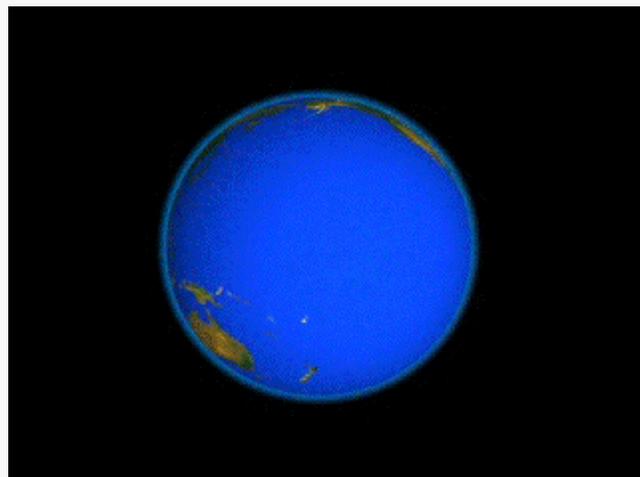


Data collected by the European Space Agency's Sentinel-1A satellite and analyzed by Deutsches Zentrum für Luft-und Raumfahrt, a research center of the German government, show that areas near Kathmandu were a meter closer to the satellite on April 29 than on April 17. Areas north of the city were found to be nearly a meter farther away.

This type of measurement isn't perfect. Radar can be scattered by snow and heavy vegetation, according to NASA, making areas covered with those features hard to compare. Satellites also don't look straight down

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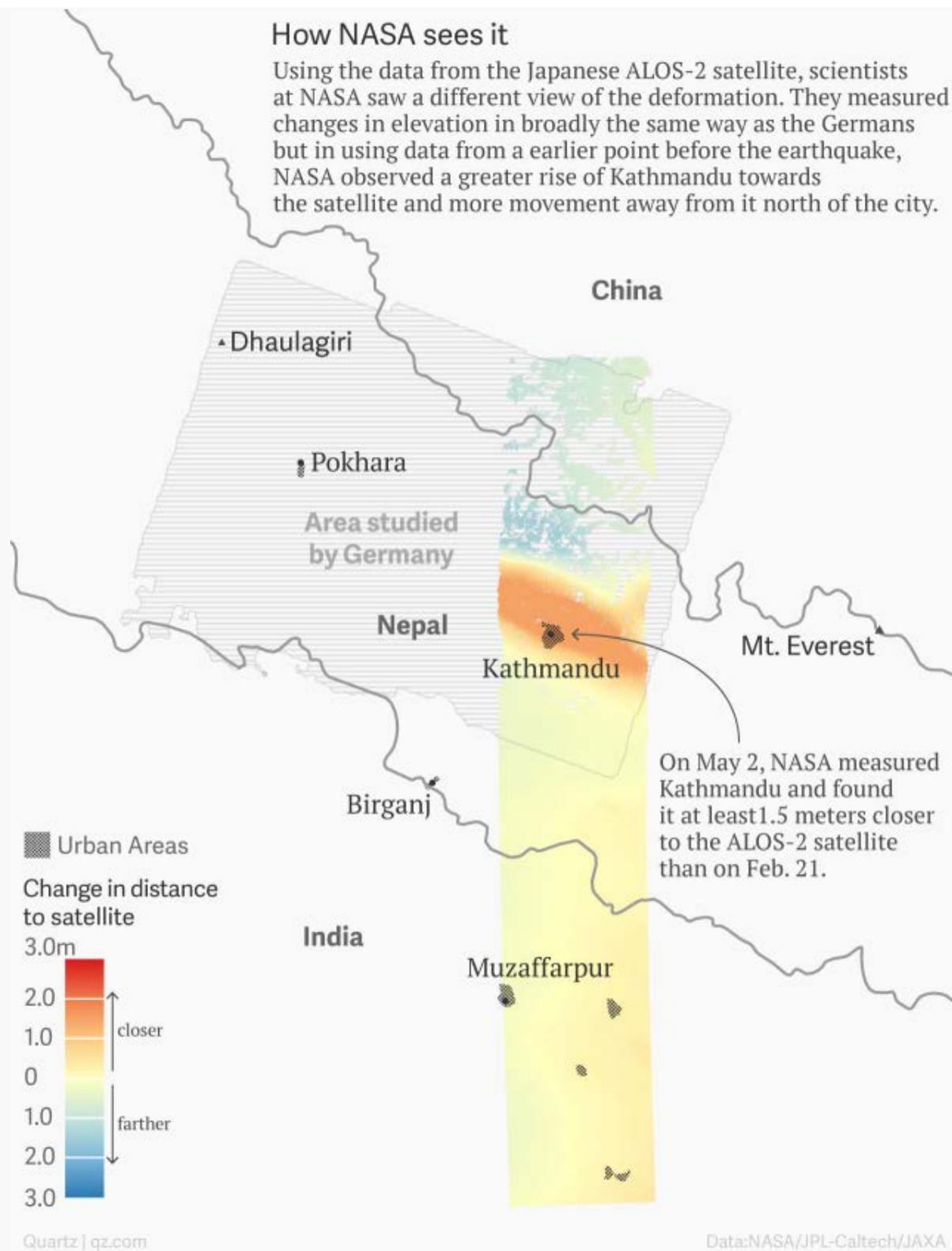
**on all areas of the earth,  
but at an angle while they  
orbit from pole to pole.**

This animation of the TERRA satellite shows the type of orbit earth observing satellites usually have. (NASA)

**In the case of the Sentinel-1A over Nepal, the angle could be up to 50 degrees. That means that the change in distance—measured at an angle instead of straight up—may not correspond to the exact measurements of the land’s rise or drop. Still, it’s an indication that something has shifted.**

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The motion of the Nepal earthquake deformation was “almost entirely vertical” and “almost purely north-south,” according to Eric Fielding, a scientist at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. This, he says, is confirmed by data collected at GPS sites in the region and makes the data analysis less affected by the