

# Bird Friendly Cities

A small bird with grey and white plumage is perched on a thin, brown branch. The bird is facing left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

Urban innovation for  
people and birds.

*Nature*  
CANADA

# Will You Commit to Making Your City Bird-Friendly?

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Canada's birds need your help. There are three billion fewer birds in North America today than 50 years ago. Much of these losses are caused by human activities.

Birds play an essential role in maintaining healthy and resilient ecosystems in our communities and our planet.

This booklet has been created as a way to provide advice on how you can help save Canada's birds and by doing so make our cities and towns healthier places. Nature Canada is calling on leaders like you to stand up for birds and the rest of nature, which will benefit all of us in the long run.



A photograph of a bird, possibly a swallow, perched on a rock with its beak wide open as if calling or singing. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

OUR BIRDS ARE IN TROUBLE,  
AND WE MUST ACT QUICKLY  
TO SAVE THEM.

# How Do We Reverse Human Impact?

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1

## Threat Reduction

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Reduce threats to birds through educational and regulatory measures to create more opportunities for birds to survive and thrive.

2

## Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Climate Resiliency

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Factor in the well-being of birds and communities when planning urban development projects to ensure that habitat conservation and restoration are prioritized.

3

## Community Outreach and Education

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Officially recognizing and celebrating days like World Migratory Bird Day will allow communities to celebrate birds and the diverse places they call home.

# Threats

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## Cats

Roaming cats are thought to account for up to 75% of all bird deaths in Canada. Feral and owned cats pose a huge risk for migratory birds in our communities. Through education, policy and bylaw enforcement, cities can become a safer place for birds and cats alike.

**Each year in Canada, cats kill between 100-350 million birds.**

- 17% from Urban Owned Cats
- 21% from Rural Owned Cats
- 59% from Feral Cats



## Collisions

Did you know that 25 million birds in Canada die annually from collisions with glass? And it's not just high-rises that kill birds. In fact, over 90 percent of collisions are caused by residential homes and low-rise buildings. In Toronto alone, there are approximately nine million bird deaths annually caused by collisions with untreated windows on buildings. As we continue to expand our cities, we have an opportunity to treat and retrofit buildings with large glass windows to be more noticeable for birds.

**25 million birds die annually from collisions with glass.**

- 90% from residential houses
- 9% from low-rise buildings
- 1% from tall buildings



## Loss of Habitat

Human expansion and urbanization have greatly reduced the opportunity for successful breeding and survival of birds. By ensuring conservation measures are in place, we can continue to support biodiversity and a healthy ecosystem within our communities.

# Things Municipalities Can Do

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As urban expansion continues, cities must act quickly to ensure that North America's bird population is protected and supported. Through the Bird-Friendly Cities program, we've outlined three categories of actions that communities can take to be a better home for birds.





# Threat Reduction

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Reduce the number of human-related threats to birds such as roaming cats, the use of pesticides, and glass treatment on buildings with large windows.

1

Regulatory and educational measures need to be taken to help control and reduce populations of roaming cats.

2

Municipal buildings should demonstrate best practices to reduce risk to birds through proven glass treatments for collision mitigation such as visual window markers to ensure birds can see barriers and adoption of Bird-Friendly design standards.

3

Create local bylaws to reduce or eliminate pesticides that are known to cause harm to birds either directly or indirectly, and raise awareness of the negative impacts that pesticides have on wildlife populations.

# Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Climate Resiliency

Create safe environments for birds by promoting stewardship and ensuring that habitats are protected.



1

Draft tree-management policies to increase the number of trees in your community, while protecting established trees on public and private land.

2

Enact Bird-Friendly City habitat management strategies for public or municipally owned lands including “no-mow” areas in local parks.

3

Localized Bird-Friendly City partner groups implement stewardship practices to support known populations of avian species at risk in the community such as Chimney Swift.



# Community Outreach and Education

Engage and educate citizens about the benefits of Bird-Friendly cities and celebrating birds in our communities.



1

Celebrate and proclaim a World Migratory Bird Day event annually to raise awareness for birds in your municipality.

2

Work with community partners to install demonstrations or displays in public areas to educate the public about the benefits of Bird-Friendly actions.

3

Businesses in your area promote Bird-Friendly practices (e.g. sell or offer Bird-Friendly coffee, no single-use plastics, treat their windows with feather-friendly markers, etc.).

# Bird Friendly City: Certification

Nature Canada has developed a certification standard to certify eligible cities as Bird Friendly Cities, to recognize and celebrate the contributions they have made to save bird lives in their municipalities. We are looking towards World Migratory Bird Day 2022 as a timeline to certify at least thirty eligible Canadian cities as a Bird Friendly City.

## **The goals of certification**

The goal of certification is to provide local partners with a clear standard that reflects what a city needs to do to make it safe for birds. In this sense, it can be considered a bird conservation strategy framework for a city.

The standard is also a tool that allows for an independent assessment of how bird friendly a particular city is at any moment in time, assessing performance on key issues, establishing benchmarks and allowing for measurement of progress over time and comparison with other cities.



# What is the standard?

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The standard consists of a series of criteria or actions; each assigned a weighted score based on our assessment of the relative importance of each criterion within the three major categories of criteria that reflect what we believe to be the most important elements of a Bird Friendly City:

- Reducing human-related threats to birds,
- Habitat protection, restoration, and climate resiliency,
- Community outreach/education.

There are three levels of Bird Friendly City status: entry, intermediate and high. The minimum standard to achieve “Entry status” is approximately 50% of the possible points within each category. “Intermediate status” is attained by achieving from 65% to 80% of possible points, and “High status” is above 80%.

All cities and towns that meet the standards would have some common elements, such as holding a World Migratory Bird Day event in their community, having a Bird Team, and promoting their status on the Municipal website.

## Why Certification?

- Certification is a badge of honor and a source of community pride. It tells the world that your city or town does things to help birds and reverse their declines in your own backyard. Your city will be issued a Bird Friendly City Certificate for the appropriate level, to recognize the contribution it has made to reverse bird population declines.
- Certification provides a rigorous standard to measure impact and progress of your work, while providing flexibility. The program design allows cities and towns to choose what issues they want to work on, yet provides a pathway to do more to help birds.
- As a Bird Friendly City, you will have access to a network of other cities and a community of people who believe in the same things that you do.
- Ecotourism—people spend money on birds. Certified bird cities could use their status to attract visitors and promote bird-based ecotourism.
- Your city gets advantages—Feather friendly products and discounts, potential access to small grants, potential to infuse biodiversity considerations into green infrastructure projects, and tools to address key issues.

## HOW CERTIFICATION WILL WORK

# What applicants have to do to apply?

1. Complete the questionnaire “[Do we have what it takes to be a Bird Friendly City?](#)” (Off the Bird Friendly City webpage).
2. Contact Nature Canada to arrange a phone meeting with a Nature Canada Bird Team representative to discuss the results of the questionnaire and your interest for certification.
3. If you “have what it takes” (i.e. a Bird Team, and a strong desire to become bird-friendly certified), you will need to attend one of Nature Canada’s Bird Friendly City webinars (approximately one hour).
4. Once you have attended the webinar, download the [Bird Friendly City Application](#) from the Nature Canada website.
5. Applications can be submitted any time of the year. Nature Canada staff will be happy to help answer questions about how to put an application together.
6. Once you have completed and submitted the application and provided Nature Canada with supporting evidence and information, Nature Canada staff will review the application and inform you of the decision.
7. If you qualify as a Bird Friendly City, you will receive a certificate from Nature Canada and information for a press release to announce your new status. There is no cost for Bird Friendly City certification in Canada.
8. You will need to provide a one-paragraph description about your city for our Bird Friendly City website.

## Certification Application Review:

Nature Canada staff and partners will review all applications in a timely manner. During this process, the evidence provided by the applicants will be vetted and verified to ensure the proper status is awarded to each applicable city. In the event that a particular city is not eligible for any Bird Friendly levels, Nature Canada will inform the applicants of this decision, and discuss strategies on the steps they can take to attain a Bird Friendly City level.





# Help Save North America's Birds

By protecting birds, we're protecting the health and well-being of our communities. From pollination to pest control, birds play a vital role in our ecosystem by contributing to biodiversity and cleaning up the environment. Through immediate action in our cities, Canada has the opportunity to create urban environments that serve people and birds for generations to come.

Together we can create Bird-Friendly:

- Cities
- Neighbourhoods
- Buildings
- Schools
- Businesses

## Get Involved!

Reach out to our program coordinator to find a regional partner near you:

**Aly Hyder Ali**

1-800-267-4088

[AHyderAli@naturecanada.ca](mailto:AHyderAli@naturecanada.ca)

**Want to learn more?**

[www.naturecanada.ca/bird-friendly-cities](http://www.naturecanada.ca/bird-friendly-cities)



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For the Prevention of Bird Collisions

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