

# Staff Report



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To	<b>Committee of the Whole</b>
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Date	Tuesday, June 7, 2022
Subject	<b>Bird Friendly City Certification</b>

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## Recommendation

1. That City Council adopt the resolution of support contained in Attachment-1 Resolution Certifying the City of Guelph a Bird Friendly City for signature by the Mayor or designate.
  2. That City Council direct staff to submit Attachment-2 City of Guelph Bird Friendly City Application and the signed resolution of support to Nature Canada to become a certified Bird Friendly City.
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

This report seeks Council endorsement for certification of Guelph as a Bird Friendly City.

### Key Findings

[Nature Canada](#) has developed a certification standard to certify eligible cities as a "Bird Friendly City", to recognize and celebrate the contributions they have made to save bird lives in their municipalities.

Guelph is committed to protecting birds and bird habitat, as demonstrated through existing policies, programs and partnerships.

The City's Bird Team, consisting of members from Bird Safe Guelph, Nature Guelph, University of Guelph Arboretum, City of Guelph and Bird Studies Canada, will oversee and lead initiatives to further the protection of birds and bird habitat.

The Bird Friendly City certification, like Guelph's Bee City designation, will be a source of community pride and provide motivation for members of our community to join together to learn more about the natural environment and actions that can be taken to make our city safer for birds.

Two rounds of community engagement were held to select Guelph's official bird, with the second round concluding on April 22. With 1,656 votes, our community chose Black-capped Chickadee as Guelph's official bird. Honourable mentions go to Chimney Swift with 715 votes and Green Heron with 407 votes.

## Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Programs and projects that support certification as outlined in the application are funded through the City's operating or capital budgets; no new project funding is required to support this certification.

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## Report

### **A Bird Friendly City takes action to protect birds and bird habitat**

In the last 50 years, North American bird populations have decreased by more than 25 per cent. Three billion birds, including common species that live in urban areas, have been lost. Guelph is helping to reverse this trend through local actions that make our city safer for birds.

[Nature Canada's Bird Friendly City certification program](#) provides a standard that cities must achieve to become a Bird Friendly City. The standard consists of criteria that are assigned a weighted score based on Nature Canada's assessment of the relative importance of each criterion. Criteria are organized into three major categories that reflect the elements of a Bird Friendly City:

1. Reducing human-related threats to birds;
2. Habitat protection, restoration and climate resiliency; and
3. Community outreach and education.

There are three levels of Bird Friendly City status: entry, intermediate and high. Nature Canada staff will review Guelph's application to determine Guelph's certification level as either the minimum standard or "entry status" (approximately 50 per cent of possible points), "intermediate status" (65 to 80 per cent of possible points) or "high status" (above 80 per cent of possible points) based on the supporting evidence and information provided in Attachment-2.

Currently, five cities in Canada have been certified as a Bird Friendly City; Guelph would join London, Toronto, Regina, Calgary and Vancouver in becoming certified.

### **What does it take to be a Bird Friendly City?**

In a Bird Friendly City, key threats to birds are mitigated, native bird populations thrive, residents are actively engaged, organizations host bird-related events, municipal policies protect birds and bird habitat, and a Bird Team oversees and leads these initiatives. A Bird Team has been established and consists of members from Bird Safe Guelph, Nature Guelph, University of Guelph Arboretum, City of Guelph and Bird Studies Canada. To maintain status as a Bird Friendly City, the Bird Team must provide an annual report card on activities related to Guelph's Bird Friendly City status.

### **Guelph's commitment to protecting birds and bird habitat is demonstrated through policies, programs and partnerships**

In Guelph, birds and bird habitat are protected through the Natural Heritage System policies of [Guelph's Official Plan](#), which emphasize the importance of protecting, maintaining, enhancing and restoring natural habitats to sustain ecological functions, habitat connectivity, biodiversity and viable populations of local wildlife. Wildlife habitat is considered through the development approvals

process to help support the maintenance of biodiversity. The enhancement of wildlife habitat is encouraged city-wide.

In 2021, the City's Policy Planning and Urban Design division released Guelph's [Bird-friendly Design Guideline](#). The guideline, which is implemented through the Site Plan Review Committee, helps to prevent bird-window collisions from occurring. The guideline was completed as part of the [Natural Heritage Action Plan](#).

In 2021, the City's Forestry and Sustainable Landscapes division planted approximately 1,000 caliper trees in parks or within road rights-of-way and an additional 6,450 native trees and shrubs were planted through naturalization plantings completed by the City and Trees for Guelph.

This year, Bird Safe Guelph, the University of Guelph Arboretum and the City of Guelph partnered to host [Guelph Bird Day](#) on May 14, 2022 at the Arboretum.

The Arboretum at the University of Guelph offers adult and family appropriate [workshops on bird identification](#) and provides a [local species list](#) boasting 211 bird species that have been found at the Arboretum.

More examples that demonstrate Guelph's existing commitment to protecting birds and bird habitat can be found in Attachment-2 City of Guelph Bird Friendly City Application.

### **Becoming a certified Bird Friendly City will strengthen partnerships and support continued action to protect birds and bird habitat**

By becoming a Bird Friendly City, partnerships among local organizations and other certified municipalities will be strengthened. Existing successes will be celebrated, local partnerships will be strengthened, and the Bird Team will be motivated to complete additional actions to further the protection of birds and bird habitat in Guelph.

### **Guelph's Official Bird**

As a precursor to becoming a Bird Friendly City, two rounds of public engagement were held in spring 2022 to select Guelph's official bird. First, a long list of birds curated by Nature Guelph Bird Wing and Bird Safe Guelph was used for the first vote. Members of the public were also able to make additions on [haveyoursay.guelph.ca](https://haveyoursay.guelph.ca) for Guelph's official bird which could then be voted on by others.

The outcome of the first vote resulted in shortlisting the three birds with the most votes for the final vote (Chimney Swift, Black-capped Chickadee and Green Heron). The second and final vote concluded on April 22, 2022, on [haveyoursay.guelph.ca](https://haveyoursay.guelph.ca). The bird that received the most votes is Guelph's official bird.

Guelph's official bird, the Black-capped Chickadee, was announced on May 14, 2022. Having an official bird for Guelph is a component of community outreach and education about the Bird Friendly City certification program, bird population declines, Guelph's efforts to reverse the decline and how individuals can help to improve outcomes for birds.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Guelph City Council adopt and sign the resolution of support contained in Attachment-1 Resolution Certifying the City of Guelph a Bird

Friendly City, and direct staff to submit Attachment-2 City of Guelph Bird Friendly City Application and the signed resolution of support to Nature Canada to become a certified Bird Friendly City.

The Bird Friendly City certification, like [Guelph's Bee City designation](#), helps to build and strengthen community partnerships, engage members of our community in habitat protection, and lends support to ongoing initiatives. By becoming a Bird Friendly City, awareness will be raised about local actions that can be taken to make our city safer for birds.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Programs and projects that support certification as outlined in the application are funded through the City's operating or capital budgets; no new project funding is required to support this certification.

### **Consultations**

Guelph's Bird Friendly City application was brought to the Natural Heritage Advisory Committee (NHAC) on April 14, 2022. [Draft minutes from the NHAC meeting](#) are available on the City's website. Comments and recommendations provided by the committee are reflected in this report and in Attachment-2 City of Guelph Bird Friendly City Application.

### **Strategic Plan Alignment**

Sustaining our Future – Planning and designing an increasingly sustainable city as Guelph grows.

### **Attachments**

Attachment-1 Resolution Certifying the City of Guelph a Bird Friendly City

Attachment-2 City of Guelph Bird Friendly City Application

Attachment-3 Bird Friendly City Certification Staff Presentation

### **Departmental Approval**

Melissa Aldunate, MCIP, RPP, Manager, Policy Planning and Urban Design

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