

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Climate Change and Environment Committee

DATE OF MEETING: October 17, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Natalie Goss, Manager Policy & Research, 519-741-2200 ext. 7648

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WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: September 6, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-453

SUBJECT: Bird Friendly City and World Migratory Bird Day

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Climate Change and Environment Committee support Kitchener becoming certified as a Bird Friendly through Nature Canada; and

That the Climate Change and Environment Committee support Kitchener proclaiming World Migratory Bird Day on an annual basis on the second Saturday of May.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to seek the Climate Change and Environment committee's support for Kitchener becoming a Bird Friendly City.
- Becoming a Bird Friendly City means that the city will be issued a certificate, be recognized for its contributions made to reverse bird population decline, and have standards to measure the impact and progress of its work,.
- This report supports Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.

BACKGROUND:

This report is in response to the following Council resolution:

"That staff be directed to investigate the benefits and feasibility of Kitchener becoming a 'Bird Friendly City' including any resource and budgetary considerations as outlined in Development Services Department report DSD-2024-081."

REPORT:

A Bird Friendly City is a community where:

- Key threats to birds are effectively mitigated.
- Nature is restored so native bird populations can thrive.
- Residents are actively engaged in admiring and monitoring local bird populations.

*** This information is available in accessible formats upon request. ***
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

- Organizations are creating events to protect birds.
- Progressive municipal policies are created to protect urban bird populations; and
- A Bird Team has been created to oversee and lead these initiatives.

Benefits of Kitchener becoming a ‘Bird Friendly City.’

- Certification
 - Is a badge of honor and a source of community pride. It tells the world that Kitchener does things to help birds and reverse their decline.
 - Kitchener will be issued a Bird Friendly City Certificate, to recognize the contributions made to reverse bird population declines.
 - Certification provides a rigorous standard to measure impact and progress of our work, while providing flexibility.
- Networking with other cities
 - As a Bird Friendly City, Kitchener will have access to a network of other cities and a community of people with shared values.
- Ecotourism
 - Certified bird cities can use their status to attract visitors and promote bird-based ecotourism.
- Kitchener gets advantages.
 - Kitchener will have access to 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.

‘Bird Friendly City’ Standards, Criteria or Actions (Certification)

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

Section 1 – Threat Reduction

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

Section 2 - Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Climate Resiliency

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

Section 3 - Community Outreach / Education.

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

Once the application is completed including supporting evidence and information it is submitted to Nature Canada. Nature Canada staff will review the application and inform the BFC Bird Team of the decision/status. The Status Level is only determined once a review of the application by Nature Canada has been completed and points have been awarded.

There are three levels of Bird Friendly City status:

- Entry: The minimum standard is approximately 50% of the possible points within each category.
- Intermediate: is attained by achieving from 65% to 80% of possible points.
- High: is attained by achieving 80% or more of possible points.

All cities and towns that meet the standard will have some common elements, such as:

- Hosting a World Migratory Bird Day event in their community,

- Having a Bird Team, and
- Promoting their status on their website.

Feasibility of Kitchener becoming a 'Bird Friendly City.'

Bird Friendly Application

This spring, members of the BFC Bird Team reached out to staff to collect information that would support how criteria in the Bird Friendly City Application from the Nature Canada is met.

Staff from across the organization (By-law Enforcement, Planning, and Forestry and Natural Areas Management) worked with members of the BFC Bird Team, providing information, specifically for Sections 1.1 - 1.7 (Threat Reduction), as well as Sections 2.1 - 2.8 (Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Climate Resiliency) of the application.

Bird Team

The BFC Bird Team's mission is to campaign for implementing bird friendly actions in their respective City to create safer urban environments for birds. The Bird Team will seek to complete its mission by:

- addressing and mitigating key threats to birds in their city,
- protecting and restoring natural habitat and increasing climate resiliency in their city, and
- conducting community outreach and education.

Members are to have a strong interest in working towards helping their city become bird friendly and reside and/or have a working connection to the city. Two members are to be liaisons, one municipal the other from Nature Canada.

Once supported by Council, it is recommended that the City's Natural Area Project Manager become the Municipal Liaison to the BFC Bird Team. They will be the communicating bridge between the local Bird Team and the municipality, highlight important considerations and context of the Bird Team's efforts, assist with identifying champions and allies, and if/when necessary, recruit municipal representatives on the Bird Team.

Currently the BFC Bird Team has representatives from Nature Canada, Feather Friendly, Rare Charitable Research Reserve, Birds Canada, University of Waterloo, Waterloo Region Nature, and private citizens who are interested in taking on a large role on the BFC initiative.

BFC Bird Team continues to build the team and public presence (website, social media, presentations) as well as document all the bird friendly measures undertaken as part of the Bird Friendly Application for Consideration (Appendix A). Once achieved, the BFC Bird Team will work to maintain the certification, which must be renewed every 2 years.

World Migratory Bird Day

Every year Nature Canada and their partners work alongside nature organizations across the country to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day. World Migratory Bird Day is celebrated the second Saturday of May each year. This time of year, is the peak of spring migration in southern Canada, marking a celebration as Canadians re-discover their feathered friends in their communities.

World Migratory Bird Day is a time to discover the wonderful birds that join us every spring and celebrate the impressive journey they've endured after many months beyond our borders! Forestry and Natural Areas staff have indicated that celebrating World Migratory Bird Day aligns with and could be incorporated into existing events or programming.

Promoting their status on the Municipal website.

If the city qualifies as a Bird Friendly City, we will receive a certificate from Nature Canada and information for a press release to announce our new status. We would need to provide a one paragraph description about our city for Nature Canada's Bird Friendly City website and the city would need to identify it's Bird Friendly City status on our website.

Conclusion

To date, minimal staff time has been necessary to support completion of the Bird Friendly Application. At present, staff have not identified any additional work needed to complete the application. In many cases, actions to meet a criterion are community-based (not municipal). Going forward, the program allows cities to choose what issues they would like to work on.

Although, there is no cost for Bird Friendly City certification, going forward, some costs may occur for staff required to liaison with the Bird Team or to assist with World Migratory Bird Day.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [DSD-2024-081](#) Kitchener Becoming a Bird Friendly City

REVIEWED BY: Gloria MacNeil, Director, By law Enforcement.
Rachel Voros, Natural Area Project Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Draft Bird Friendly Application for Consideration