

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: December 2, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director, Planning and Housing Policy and City Planner, 519-783-8929

PREPARED BY: Carrie Musselman, Senior Environmental Planner, 519-783-8940

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: October 30, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-480

SUBJECT: Becoming a Bird Friendly City and World Migratory Bird Day

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council endorse becoming certified as Bird Friendly by Nature Canada; and

That staff be directed to undertake activities to uphold the Bird Friendly City status, participate on a community-based Bird Team, and contribute to an annual report card on activities related to the City's Bird Friendly City status; and

That World Migratory Bird Day be proclaimed on an annual basis on the second Saturday of May; and further,

That the proclamation be posted on the City's website and staff be directed to promote the proclamation, and support a World Migratory Bird Day event, as appropriate.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to receive Council endorsement to become a Bird Friendly City.
- The key finding of this report are that becoming a Bird Friendly City means the city will be issued a certificate, be recognized for its contributions made to reverse bird population decline and will have access to a network of other cities and a community of people with shared values.
- There are no financial implications to the recommendations in this report.
- Community engagement included this report posted online as part of the Committee agenda, consultation with the community-based Bird Team, and with the Climate Change and Environment Committee.

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

- 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:

At the January 18, 2024 Climate Change and Environment Committee (CCEC), a member of the committee, presented on the 'Bird Friendly Cities' Certification Program through Ontario Nature. Following the presentation, a recommendation was put forward by the committee and the committee resolved ... *"That the Climate Change and Environment committee support bringing the exploration of Kitchener becoming a Bird City to council."*

The request was presented in report DSD-2024-081 at the February 26, 2024, Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee, and resolved... *"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.
- Organizations are creating events to protect birds.
- Progressive municipal policies are created to protect urban bird populations; and
- A community-based 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 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 it is submitted to Nature Canada. Nature Canada staff and external reviewers from their National Advisory Panel will review the application and inform the Bird Friendly City (BFC) Bird Team of the decision/status.

There are three levels of Bird Friendly City status:

- Entry: The minimum, approx. 50% of the possible points within each category.
- Intermediate: achieving from 65% to 80% of possible points.
- High: 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 community-based 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. Minimal staff time was necessary to support completion of the Bird Friendly Application.

Community Based Bird Friendly City (BFC) 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 BFC 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 BFC Bird Team and the municipality, highlight important considerations and context of the BFC Bird Team's efforts, assist with identifying champions and allies, and if/when necessary, recruit municipal representatives on the BFC 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 its Bird Friendly City status on our website.

Resource and budgetary considerations

In many cases, actions to meet a criterion are community-based (not municipal). For those actions that are municipal, the program allows cities to choose what matters 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 BFC Bird Team or to assist with World Migratory Bird Day, those costs could be considered part of ongoing efforts to support environmental initiatives.

Bird Friendly City Application

An initial application was submitted by the BFC Bird Team in September. During the application review process, it was found that the application was two points shy to meet Entry Level Status. An application with revisions and additional information was resubmitted on October 30, 2024 (Appendix A).

On November 8th it was shared with staff that after reviewing all the additional information provided by the BFC Bird Team, Nature Canada granted Kitchener Bird Friendly City Certification. Nature Canada will be celebrating the now 30 Bird Friendly Cities, Towns and Villages across the county with a national press release on November 18th.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

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.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget or Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the committee meeting.

CONSULT – The original request was presented at the January 18, 2024, CCEC meeting; further, the request was summarized, and direction given to staff to investigate the benefits and feasibility of Kitchener becoming a ‘Bird Friendly City’ at the February 26, 2024, Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee. An update on the Bird Friendly City work will be shared with the CCEC on November 21, 2024.

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
Natalie Goss, Manager, Policy & Research

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A – Revised Bird Friendly Application