



# **Bird Friendly Toronto Newsletter**

## **Fall 2025**

### **Bird News**

#### **Breeding Bird Atlas Preliminary Data for Toronto**

The Breeding Bird Atlas is a citizen science project of Birds Canada. The purpose is to track where birds are breeding across Canada, and to watch trends in breeding populations. 2025 was the fifth and final year of the third Bird Atlas. For the sake of data collection and recording, Ontario is divided into regions. Toronto is Region #12, and includes Mississauga, Brampton, Woodbridge, Vaughan, Markham, and Pickering out to Harwood Rd in the east. This region is further divided into 17 squares, 10 km x 10 km in area. Keen birders are enlisted to gather breeding bird information over five years for their square. When a bird is sighted in breeding habitat, a 'breeding code' is assigned to the bird according to its location and behaviour. These codes give the bird a 'possible', 'probable' or 'confirmed' breeding status in that square.

So how many species nested in the Toronto region this summer?

Ducks, Gulls, Terns, Grebes, and Cormorants: 18 species

Songbirds and Woodpeckers: 77

Shorebirds: 5

Marshbirds: 4

Birds of Prey, Vultures, Falcons: 10

Wild turkey

Common Nighthawk

14 further species were given a probable status.

Please find the full list of birds [here](#) and check it out for surprises! Find the list of breeding codes [here](#).

#### **Cormorant Colony on the Toronto Islands**

Toronto is home to the largest double-crested colony in North America, in Tommy Thompson Park. However, over the past three years, a growing portion of the colony has moved to an Environmentally Sensitive Area near Hanlan's Point. It is thought that the birds may have moved because they were experiencing predation by raccoons in Tommy Thompson Park. Because of the damage the birds cause to trees, TRCA has been using deterrent practices to try to prevent them from nesting and expanding the colony. Proposed solutions include relocation, culling, and creating a new island for them to nest on (as proposed in a Toronto Star article published on August 14th).

## **What the Bird Friendly Toronto Team is Working On**

### **Outreach**

Team members will be giving talks about how we can all make Toronto more bird-friendly at these Toronto Public Library locations: Steeles (Sept 19), Malvern (Sept 23), Palmerston (Sept 23), Danforth/Coxwell (Nov 6), and North York Central (Nov 22). We will be participating in the Long Branch Tree Fest on September 21st, and giving a talk about the Bird Friendly City program to the North York Probus Club on September 24th.

### **Nature Canada Report Card**

Members of the team have been working on Toronto's annual report card, which is due in November. The Bird Friendly City report card asks us to confirm that mandatory criteria are being fulfilled, and to document progress made by the City in the three categories of Threat Reduction, Habitat Protection, and Outreach and Education. The report card and other Bird Friendly City resources can be seen on the [Nature Canada website](#).

## **How You Can Help Birds This Fall**

### **Lights Out**

Fall migration is underway, and most birds migrate at night. Bright lights attract and disorient birds, and can cause them to fly into windows and other glass structures. Turning off non-essential indoor and outdoor lights is an easy way to make migration safer for birds while conserving energy and creating a healthier urban environment for all living beings (including humans). Outdoor lighting should be directed downward and in the warm colour spectrum.

### **Plant Shrubs**

Walter Klem, a renowned bird-friendly landscape architect from Pennsylvania, is quoted as saying about the Toronto ravines, "One of the missing pieces in the puzzle isn't really the trees so much as it is the second story shrubs, or more accurately, the lack of them. As soon as you establish the shrubs, my gosh, the spring migration of warblers and thrushes and ovenbirds is unbelievable." (The Bird-Friendly City, pg. 157). Shrubs are critical in a bird-friendly environment, and fall is a good time to plant them. Native shrubs are of course better, and there will be considerations of moisture and exposure, as to what works in your space. Here are two excellent resources to help you choose the best shrubs to plant:

[Halton Region Native Vegetation List](#)

[City of Toronto native Vegetation list](#)

## **Tree Removal Bylaw Survey**

Birds need trees for food, shelter, and locations for nesting. Trees are also a critical component of Toronto's Climate Change strategy. The City of Toronto is considering changing the [Tree Removal Bylaw](#) to make it more expensive and difficult to remove a tree from private property, and at a younger age. The proposed changes address the concern about climate change, but not the critical role trees play in protecting biodiversity. How so? The proposed changes do not distinguish between native and non-native trees. Native trees support insect populations, and hence birds and ecosystems, but non-native trees do not.

The proposed changes will make it more difficult to remove a non-native or invasive tree, such as Norway Maple or Tree of Heaven. These trees are a threat to our ravines and bird habitat in the city.

You can submit comments on the City of Toronto's bylaw for tree protection on private land before September 24. There are a number of 'comments' boxes where concerns about the failure of the proposed policy changes to protect biodiversity can be entered.

Wishing you a great fall!