

For Immediate Release



THE BIRDS ARE BACK IN TOWN, JOIN THE CELEBRATION

The Toronto Bird Celebration: 15 days, 35 events, 16 organizations, 50 million birds.

15 April 2019 (*Toronto, Ontario*) – During May, more than 50 million wild birds will return from their wintering grounds, with some travelling from as far as South America. Everyone is invited to celebrate that ‘Birds are Everywhere’ with events happening across the Greater Toronto Area. From festivals to paddle boarding, bird walks to gardening workshops, there are activities for all ages and backgrounds happening during the Toronto Bird Celebration, 11-25 May 2019.

“Toronto’s incredible bird diversity is one of the city’s best-kept secrets; people don’t need to leave the city to see an incredible diversity of wildlife; instead they can enjoy some of the world’s most stunning and colourful birds by looking out their front window or taking a walk outside on their lunch hour,” says Becky Stewart, Ontario Program Director for Bird Studies Canada. “This year is the third edition of the Toronto Bird Celebration, and it’s going to be the best yet. We hope that the celebration will increase Torontonians’ awareness of the incredible bird life around. You don’t need to be an avid bird enthusiast to enjoy the celebration – if you are interested in health and wellness, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, or family events, then the celebration has something for you.”



Toronto is a fascinating bird watching spot; millions of birds descend upon the city’s parks, waterways, and urban neighbourhoods each spring. Located where two of the great North American bird migration routes meet (the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways), the city supports a large proportion of Canada’s bird biodiversity. Over 390 bird species, including some of Canada’s **most rare and at-risk birds**, make Toronto their home for some part of the

year. **Several million individual birds depend on the city's wetlands, parks, ravines, human-built structures, and gardens** annually. Further, the city boasts many **bird biodiversity hotspots** and a **globally designated Important Bird Area**.

These wild birds enrich the natural environment, cultural and urban life in Toronto. With their bright colours and beautiful songs, they provide mental health benefits, helping to reduce stress and improve people's lives. They also provide critical pest control by eating billions of insects, they pollinate urban gardens and disperse thousands of seeds. Andrea Chreston, Tommy Thompson Park Project Manager for the TRCA, further explains; "We are so lucky to live in a city lush with natural areas, including ravines and parks like Tommy Thompson. Not only do these spaces give us a place to play and connect with nature, but they also provide essential habitat for migratory and breeding birds. The Toronto Bird Celebration is the perfect opportunity for Torontonians to get out, explore these areas and learn about the important roles of nature and birds in our urban environments."

A full list of events is available at torontobirdcelebration.ca. The Toronto Bird Celebration events are mostly free, open to all and range from paddleboarding to festivals. The goal is clear: the celebration will introduce thousands of Torontonians to the birds from their own neighbourhood. By innovative means, people will appreciate that birds add vitality to urban culture, and this year, Pattison Outdoors and Acart have supported a striking campaign in the TTC subway showcasing birds and the urban culture in Toronto.

"Torontonians are fortunate to live in a place conducive to an excellent variety and quantity of wild bird life. What's more, the city is home to more than a critical mass of interested people and organizations eager to share knowledge and experience of our birds with anyone interested in learning more," says Justin Peter, President of the Toronto Ornithological Club.

Highlights include:

- **Two of Toronto's largest birding festivals** – The Celebration is 'book-ended' by two of Toronto's largest birding festivals: The Spring Bird Festival at Tommy Thompson Park, and the Colonel Sam Smith Bird Festival.
- **A Swift Night Out** – during this event people will discover Toronto's best-kept secret, witnessing thousands of Chimney Swifts flying into chimneys to roost. Like watching fireworks, at dusk, a crowd – with lawn chairs, picnic blankets, and binoculars – will settle in to watch the swifts funnel into the Moss Park Armoury chimney.
- **Youth and family programming:** this year's celebration takes the birds to people's neighbourhoods. Youth will have an opportunity to experience bird watching hands-on with the Toronto Region and Conservation Authority's **Bird Spotting Clubs**. And kids will be able to [spot birds for citizen science in Downsview Park Nature Connection](#) and Bird Studies Canada Schoolyard Bird Blitz. Other organizations like the Toronto Zoo, Ontario BioBlitz and the Humber Arboretum will have plenty of bird watching opportunities for kids and youth. For those looking for something different, the Shadowland Theater will [create bird inspired puppets](#) at the Thorncliffe Market.
- **Gardening workshops:** those passionate about creating a bird oasis have opportunities to discover how to garden for birds through the seasons.
- **Bird crossover:** if you are passionate about the outdoors, join the Toronto Island SUP and Bird Studies Canada in a bird-oriented paddle boarding tour. Passionate photographers can take their skills to the realm of wildlife photography with the Toronto Ornithological Club.

- Daily bird walks and watches, organized by Toronto's prominent organizations, like the City of Toronto, the Toronto Ornithological Club and the TRCA, are held throughout the city to look and listen for all types of birds; **everyone (of any birding skill level) is welcome.**

Thanks to the support of TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and The Weston Garfield Foundation, the celebration is supported by a dedicated website torontobirdcelebration.ca. Here you'll find a running tally of the birds observed daily; a full **calendar of events**, and FREE ONLINE resources such as a **multilingual Map Guide to the Birds of Toronto**.

Media Contacts

Ruth Friendship- Keller

Director of Communications, Bird Studies Canada

Tel: 519-586-3531 ext. 111 | Toll free: 1-888-448-2473

rfriendshipkeller@birdscanada.org | birdscanada.org

Toronto Region Conservation Authority (Partner)

Jess Harris

416-661-6600 ext. 5414

media@trca.on.ca

More about the celebration:

- Why a celebration? Around the world, cities are being recognized for their important role in sustaining ecosystems. Besides, it has been clearly demonstrated that **urban biodiversity is critical to city people's health and well-being**. With most Canadians living in cities, it is crucial that we increase the public's understanding and appreciation of urban nature, for the benefit of humans and wildlife alike.
- Bird Studies Canada is coordinating the Toronto Bird Celebration and is Canada's leading national charitable organization dedicated to bird science and conservation.
- The Toronto Bird Celebration is delivered by a large partnership of Toronto conservation organizations: Bird Studies Canada, City of Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto Ornithological Club, Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Toronto Region Conservation Authority, Toronto Zoo, Fatal Light Awareness Program, High Park Nature Centre, Humber Arboretum, Citizens Concerned About the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront, Downsview Park, Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee, Shadowland Theater, Toronto Island SUP, West Willowdale Neighbourhood Association, Edithvale-Yonge Community Association.