



Birds and Cities

REDUCING THREATS
AND SAVING BIRD LIVES!



TWC's Education Program is generously supported by:



TWC Fast Facts

- ▶ Open daily since **1993**
- ▶ **Up to 6,500** sick, injured and orphaned wild animals admitted yearly with the ultimate goal of returning them back to the wild once healthy
- ▶ More than **300** different species admitted
- ▶ **~40,000** calls handled by hotline staff yearly
- ▶ **~1,000** wild animals rescued yearly
- ▶ Up to **5,000** children, youth and adults educated each year through public presentations and events; **thousands more** through our other communication channels
- ▶ TWC is a **charity** and operates on **donations** – we are **the only hospital** for wildlife in Toronto





**What do you
think are the
biggest
threats
facing
songbirds?**

S.O.S. – Save Our Songbirds!

- ▶ Forests alone have lost 1 billion birds since 1970.
- ▶ Grassland birds are also hard hit, with a 53% reduction in population—more than 720 million birds.
- ▶ Aerial insectivores—birds like swallows, nighthawks, and flycatchers—are down by 32%, or 160 million.
- ▶ Coastal shorebirds, already at dangerously low numbers, lost more than one-third of their population.
- ▶ The volume of spring migration has dropped by 14% in just the past decade.

CONSERVATION

Silent Skies: Billions of North American Birds Have Vanished

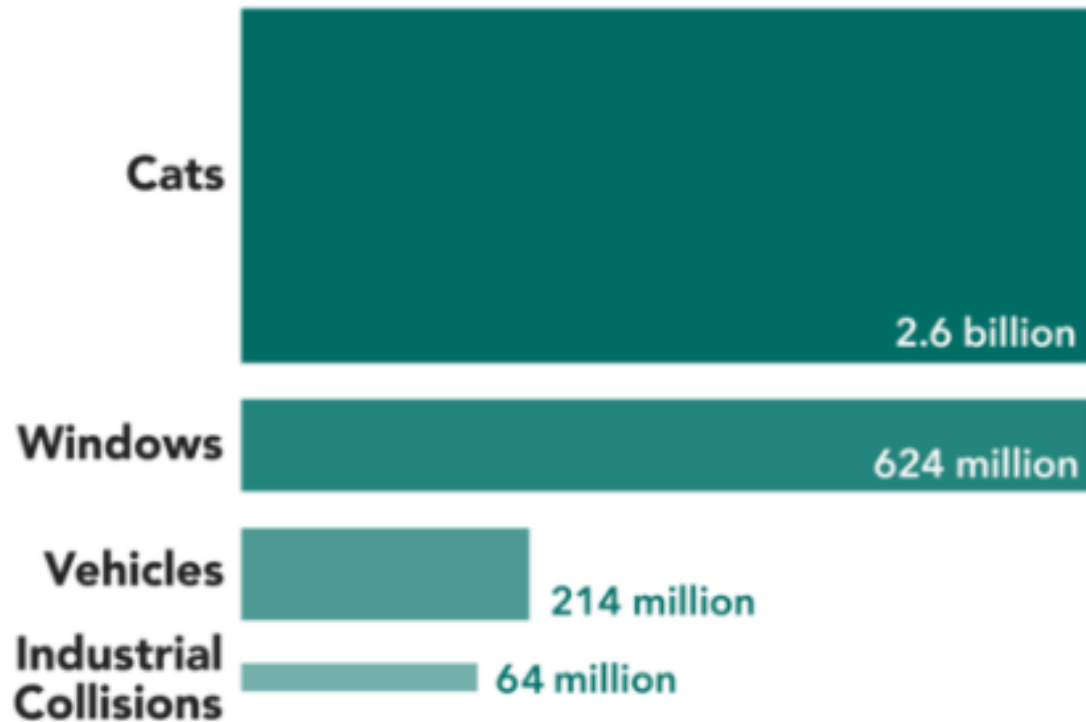
Though waterfowl and raptor populations have made recoveries, bird populations have declined since 1970 across nearly all habitats

By Jim Daley on September 19, 2019



What's Killing North America's Birds?

Per-year estimates of mortality. Source: Loss et al. 2015



Estimates of annual bird deaths from specific human-related causes (other than habitat loss) in the United States and Canada. Industrial collisions include deaths from power lines (57 million), communication towers (6.8 million), and wind turbines (140,000–679,089). Source: Loss et al. 2015.



- ▶ Infographic Source: www.3billionbirds.org/findings
- ▶ Photo: Ann Brokelman

Cats & Wildlife

www.catsandbirds.ca

Environment Canada research estimates that **humans are responsible for the deaths of 130 to 433 million birds each year** (this number does not include the impacts of climate change or habitat loss).

Feral and free-roaming pet **cats cause approximately 75% of those deaths**. Many other small species are frequently injured or killed by cats too, including field mice, snakes, baby cottontail rabbits, baby squirrels, and chipmunks.

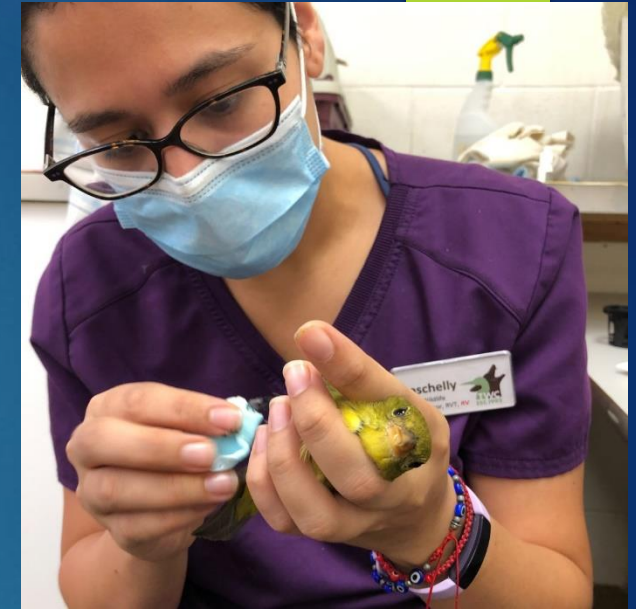


TWC's Wildlife Hotline receives **hundreds** of calls each year about birds attacked by cats.



Injuries from Cat Attacks

- ▶ TWC's Wildlife Hotline receives hundreds of calls about birds and other animals attacked by cats every year
- ▶ Common injuries include:
 - ▶ Tail feathers ripped out
 - ▶ Open wounds
 - ▶ Subcutaneous emphysema
 - ▶ Fractured bones
 - ▶ Head trauma
- ▶ A cat attack is an emergency for a bird!
- ▶ This scarlet tanager suffered ulcers in both eyes, several cuts and puncture wounds on his hips plus bruising on his shoulders.



Even with
medical
treatment,
most birds
attacked
by a cat
will not
survive.



Keep Cats Safe Too!

- ▶ Free-roaming cats:
 - ▶ Can be the victim of a car strike
 - ▶ Can get into fights with other cats
 - ▶ Can get into fights or be preyed upon by wildlife (e.g. coyotes, raccoons, great-horned owls)
 - ▶ Can ingest harmful or poisonous materials
 - ▶ Can become the victim of cruelty
 - ▶ Can become a new pet to someone else
- ▶ Walking a cat on a leash or keeping them in an enclosure can save bird lives and their own!
 - ▶ The reality of scrunchies and bells, and “my cat doesn’t kill”
 - ▶ Goal: to transition away from having free-roaming cats outdoors
 - ▶ www.catsandbirds.ca for tips!



Birds & Windows

- Daytime:
 - Birds can see through glass and what is reflected on glass but not the glass itself
 - Collide with buildings as they fly toward objects that are actually behind them
- Nighttime:
 - City lights draw birds in, confusing them
 - They then collide with windows or collapse from exhaustion attempting to escape city mazes



WRN

WRN

Ri

all FLAT bags



Paper bags and small cardboard boxes are the safest way to transport injured songbirds!

Treatment at TWC

- ▶ TWC typically admits 1,000+ birds each year that have collided with glass
- ▶ The following patients exemplify typical injuries associated with window strikes:
 - ▶ A wood thrush is anaesthetized for an x-ray which shows a broken clavicle
 - ▶ A yellow-bellied sapsucker is checked for eye ulcers or bleeding behind the eyes
 - ▶ An ovenbird receives pain medication for head trauma



Just because a bird can fly does not mean that they will survive. Immediate medical attention is the best option for any bird that has collided with glass.

Addressing the Issue - Transparent Glass



Addressing the Issue - Reflective Glass



Preventative Solutions

www.flap.org



Birds Need Habitat

#BackyardBiodiversity



Problems with lawns:

- “Weeds” often removed creating a monoculture
- No nourishment or shelter for a variety of wild species
- Have often replaced good habitat
- Value is on aesthetics rather than functionality

Plant Native Species For Wildlife



- Focus on native species – they have evolved alongside wild animal species and provide the food and habitat they need to thrive
- Planting fruit and seed-bearing plants give wild animals a natural and nutritional food source
- Leave the leaves! And the stalks, stems and seed-heads up for the winter
 - Wild animals will take full advantage of the leftovers!
 - Insects are hibernating
- Select a variety of native plants, shrubs and trees – even grasses!
- Plant native trees; leave decaying trees standing as a food source and for shelter; protect mature trees

Should I Put Up A Bird Feeder?



- Birds congregate in close proximity increasing the spread of disease – e.g. conjunctivitis
- Predation may increase at bird feeders
- If you feed **ONE** species, you feed **ALL** species

Bird Feeders 101

To reduce risks posed by feeders:

- Take the feeder down weekly and wash it out with hot soapy water and let it dry completely before filling up with fresh seed
- Clean up seed that has fallen to the ground several times a week to avoid attracting other wildlife
- Avoid using human food that can be greasy and get on feathers (e.g. peanut butter)
- Place feeders within half a meter, or 1.5 feet of a window – if a bird still collides with the window, they will be less likely to build up enough momentum to seriously hurt themselves
- Feeders don't replace the need for habitat – shelter is equally important to food and not all birds eat seed!



What do
you think
are the
biggest
threats
facing
birds of
prey?



Vehicle Strikes

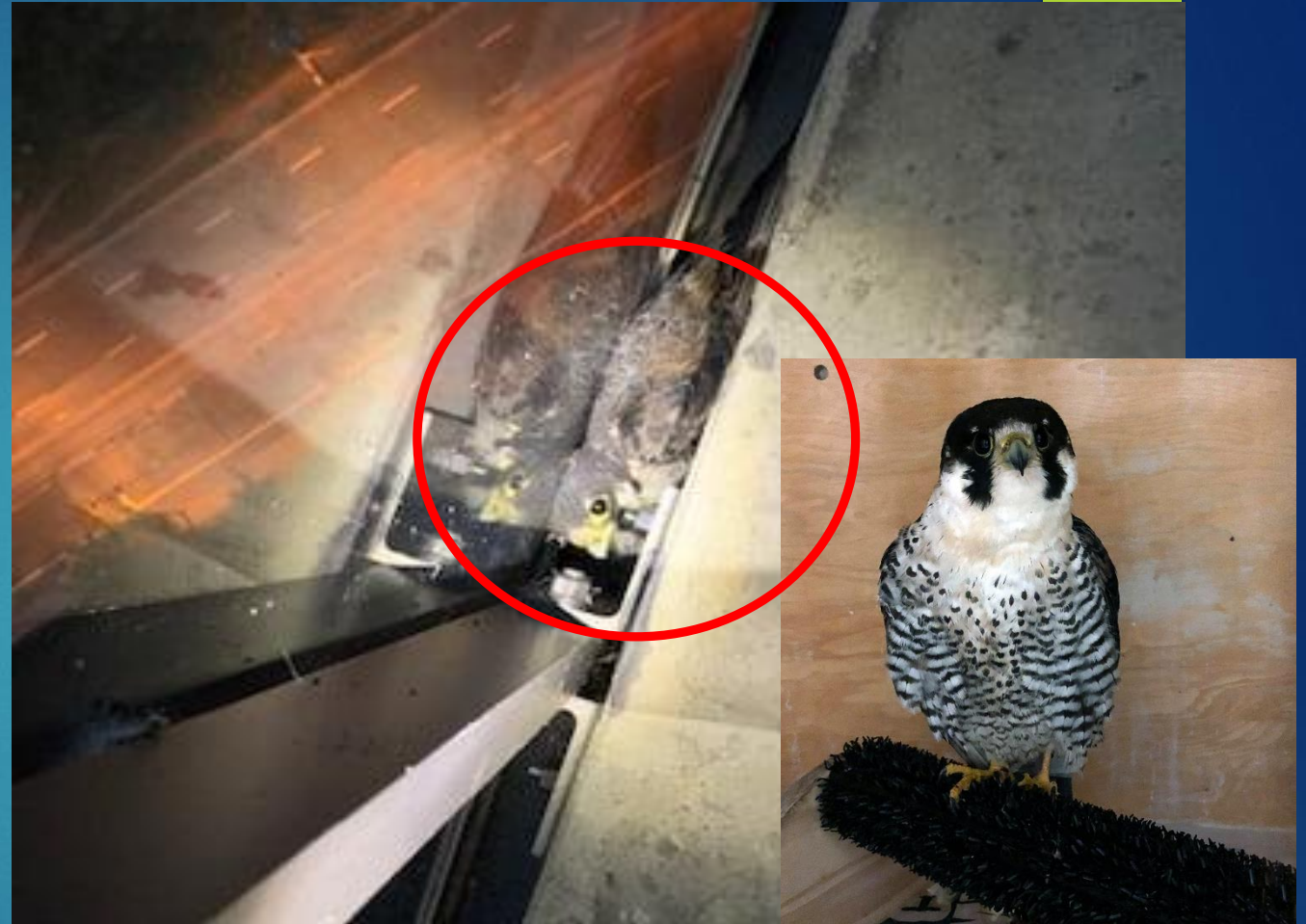
- ▶ Birds of prey often hunt near roads, putting them in the path of moving vehicles
- ▶ Common injuries include fractured bones and head trauma and can take weeks or months to heal
- ▶ You can help by:
 - ▶ Slowing down in areas where birds of prey are known to frequent
 - ▶ Don't toss food out of your car window
 - ▶ Call TWC if you find an injured bird of prey





Window Strikes

- ▶ Windows pose same risks to birds of prey as songbirds
 - ▶ Same mitigation techniques can be used
- ▶ High-rise buildings pose a particular concern to birds of prey in dense urban centres
- ▶ Peregrine falcons nest on many downtown towers
 - ▶ Young taking their first flight often collide with windows, some fatally
- ▶ The Canadian Peregrine Foundation monitors these birds
 - ▶ www.peregrine-foundation.ca



This bird arrived at TWC suffering from a chest wound, blood in his right eye, and his right wing and foot were swollen – injuries that suggest he had collided with the glass railing before becoming stuck.

Trapped in Buildings and Structures





Cool and Unusual Techniques!



Poison

- ▶ Recent study* confirmed that anticoagulant rodenticides (ARs) are common in Southern Ontario birds of prey
 - ▶ Detectable levels of one or more ARs were found in 82 of 133 (62%) tested raptors, representing 12 species.
- ▶ Mice and rats are a critical food supply for many species of predators!
- ▶ TWC never recommends using poison or glue traps
- ▶ Humane approaches to rodent management
 - ▶ Address WHY they are there in the first place!



* Thornton, G.L., Stevens, B., French, S.K. et al. Anticoagulant rodenticide exposure in raptors from Ontario, Canada. *Environ Sci Pollut Res* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-022-18529-z>



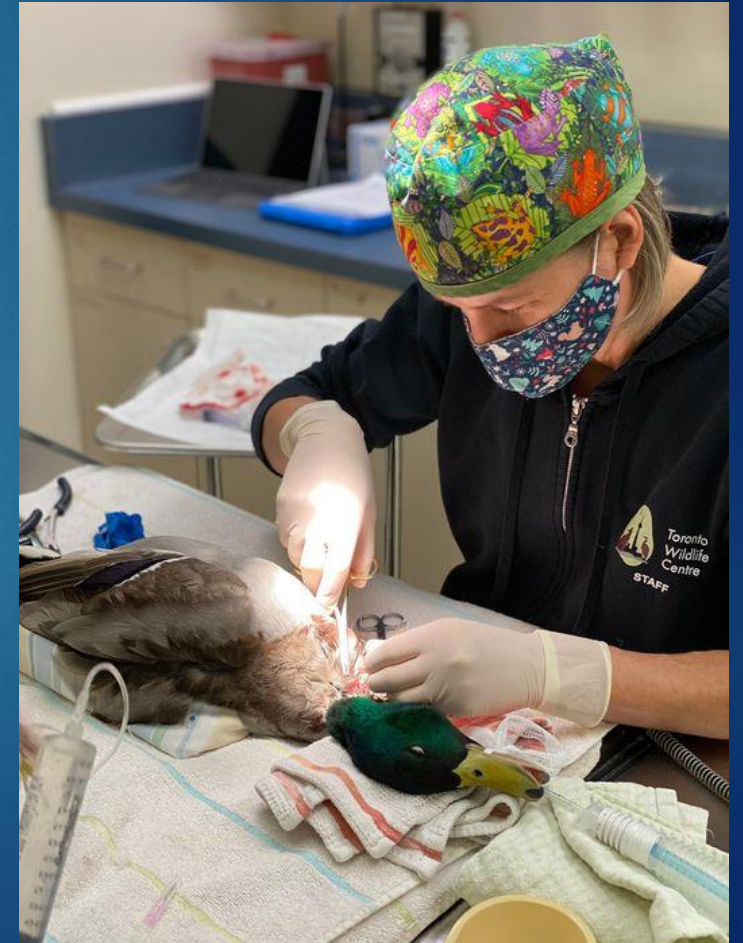
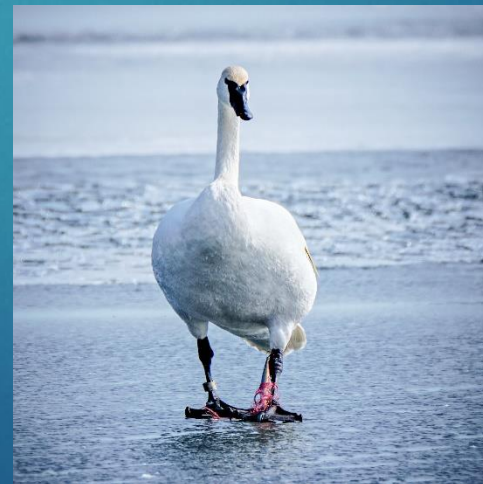
What do you think are the biggest threats facing water birds?



This Canada goose struggled to walk with fishing line wrapped around both legs

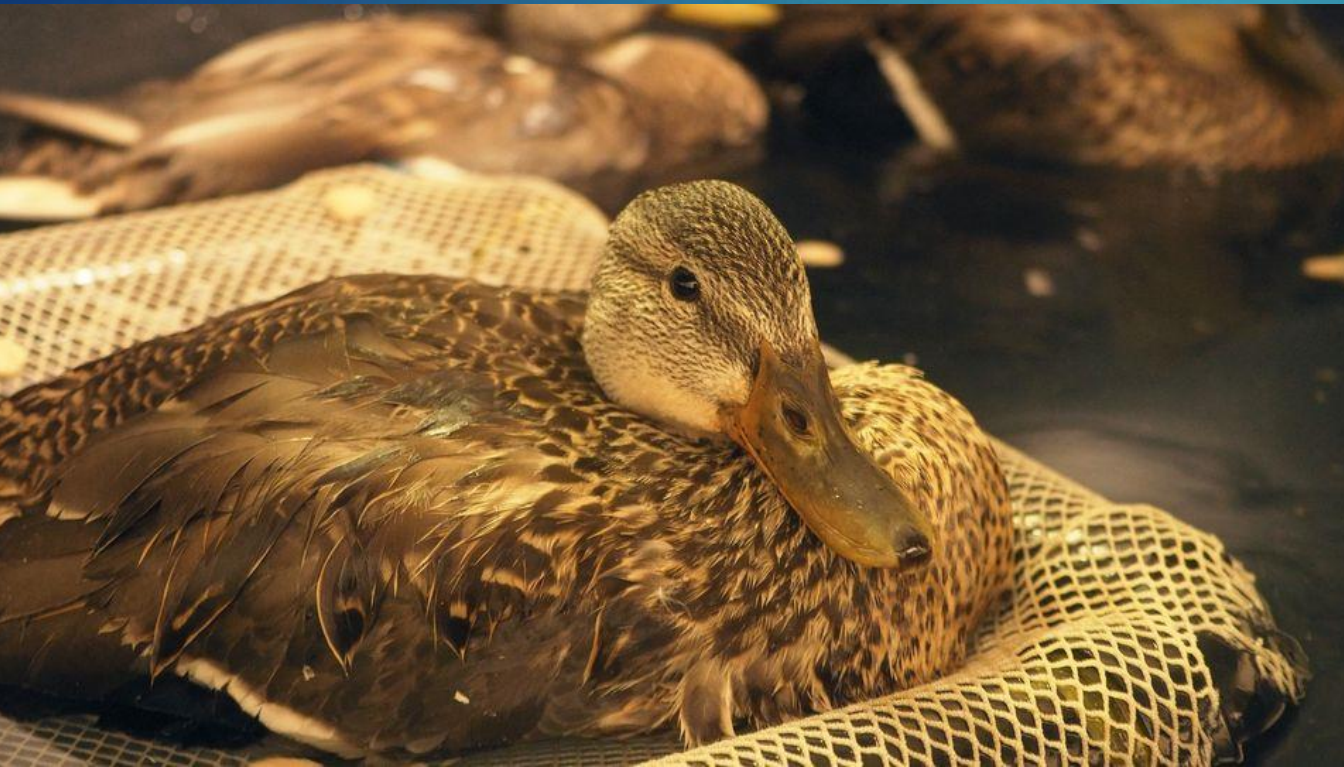
Fishing line, hooks and lead sinkers

- ▶ Dozens of water birds such as swans, ducks, geese, mergansers, herons and grebes admitted to TWC every year due to these issues
- ▶ Hooks and line can be wrapped around wings, limbs and beaks, embedded in flesh, or even swallowed
- ▶ Lead sinkers affects bottom-feeders, like swans, who ingest them and become poisoned
- ▶ NEVER cut a line while fishing and ALWAYS bring all of your gear back with you!



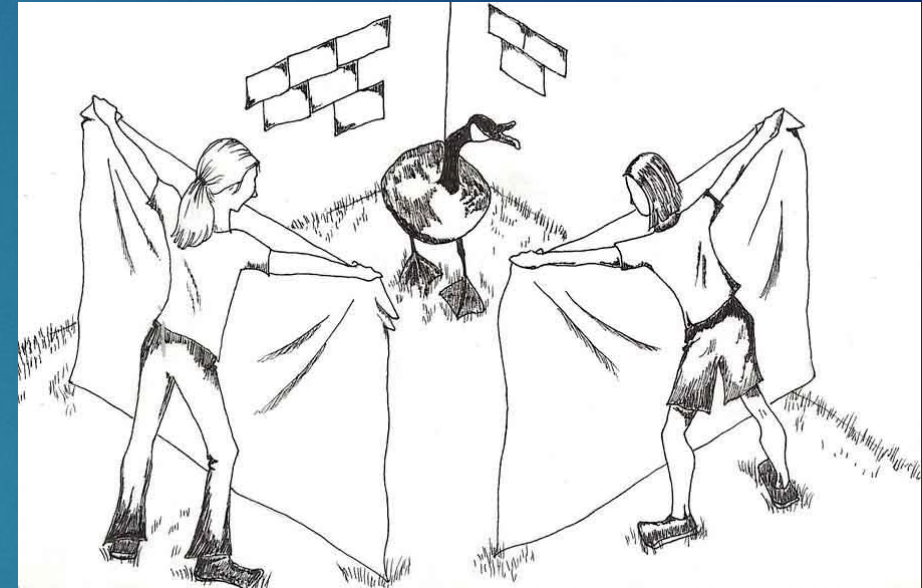
Additional Threats

- ▶ Heat / climate change
- ▶ Outbreaks – botulism, Newcastle's disease



If you find a sick or injured bird

- ▶ www.torontowildlifecentre.com for species specific information on how to contain
- ▶ No food or water
- ▶ Dark, quite place
- ▶ No treatment!
- ▶ Smooth-sided enclosure such as a paper bag, cardboard box, plastic pet carrier (with grate covered in a towel)
- ▶ Some birds (like herons) have pointy beaks – wear protective eyewear
- ▶ Some situations require the assistance of TWC's Wildlife Rescue team

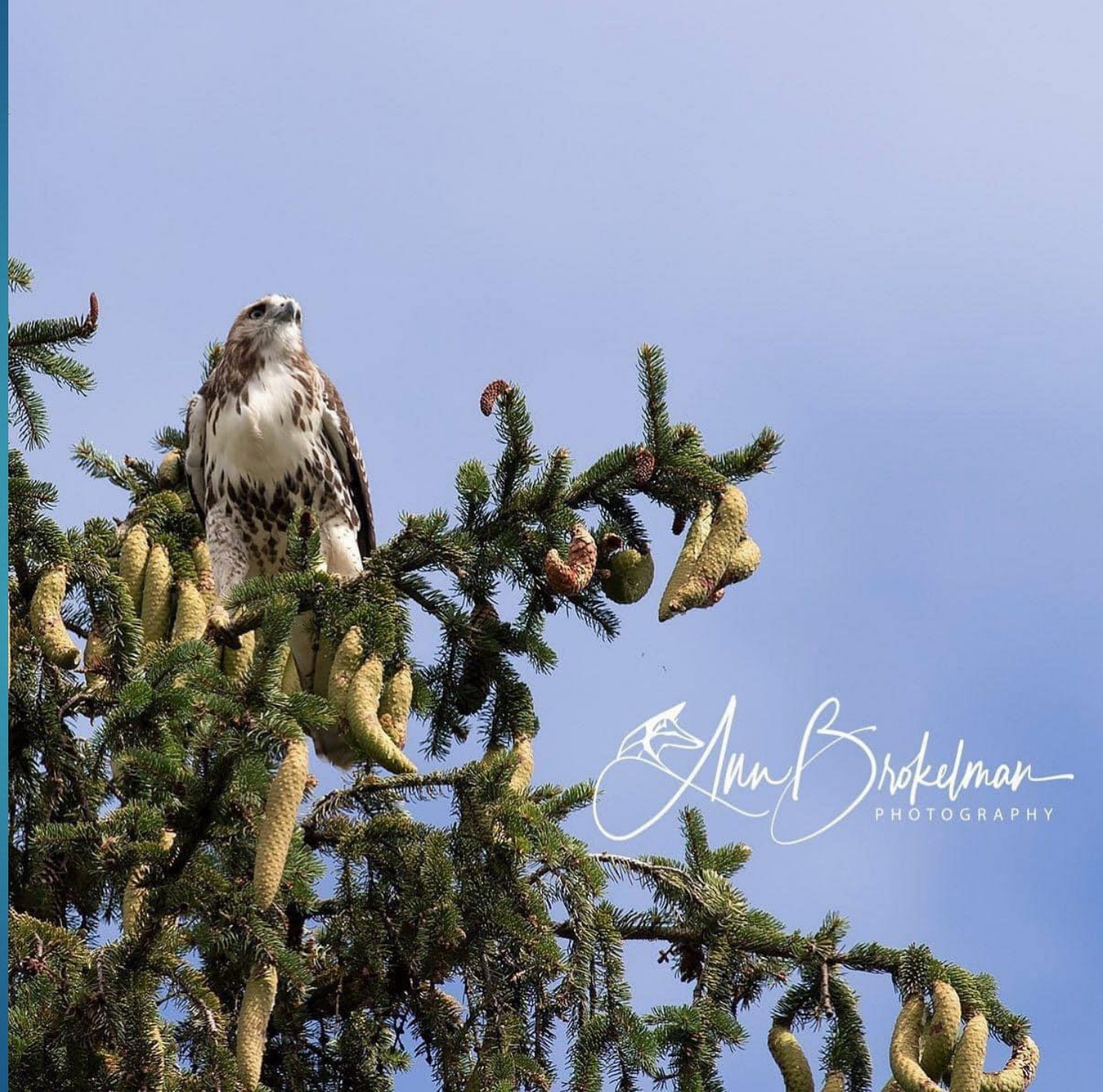


Join Us!

- ▶ TWC relies on the help of up to 400 volunteers every year!
- ▶ Diverse opportunities – transcribe emergency phone calls, assist in the administration department, cleaning, carpentry, animal care, driving, and more!
- ▶ We cannot save wild lives without the support of our amazing volunteer team!



Your gift
gives a bird
a chance
to fly free
once
again!



Ann Brokelman
PHOTOGRAPHY

Share. Connect. Learn.



www.torontowildlifecentre.com



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@TWC_Wildlife



@torontowildlifecentre

Join us again!

Remarkable Residents!

- ▶ Busting myths and misconceptions about urban wildlife!
- ▶ Wednesday, February 23rd at 10am



Wild Babies!

- ▶ Learn common reasons why wild babies become orphaned and what to do if you find a wild baby!
- ▶ Wednesday, April 6th at 10am

