

Lions Bay, bird friendly designation

BY Penny Nelson

Residents of Lions Bay see many birds at close range in their yards and take great joy in watching them. But there are three billion fewer birds in North America today than 50 years ago, mostly due to human activities. Which is why, in May 2021, a group of Lions Bay residents decided to create awareness of the issues impacting birds in the hope of making our village safer for them.

The first goal was to pursue Nature Canada's Bird Friendly City certification. When we began, there were no criteria for tiny towns, but a new category for municipalities of 15,000 residents or less was launched in October 2021. Our application was submitted at the end of March once we believed we'd qualify. Then we waited!

Lions Bay has a long history of actively supporting conservation efforts both in the village and in and around Howe Sound. We were nevertheless blown away by the enthusiastic support from the community as we ramped up for our first Bird Friendly community event to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day on May 14 (a mandatory requirement for Bird Friendly Cities).

But would we also be able to celebrate being the first small town in Canada to earn Bird Friendly City status at our event? The

announcement came from Nature Canada on May 10. It was official. We were!

What is a Bird Friendly City? The designation is awarded to communities that meet criteria aimed at reducing threats to birds, protecting/restoring habitat, and outreach to bring about changes that help bird populations stay strong or recover.

Reasons for the loss of so many birds include light pollution, window and vehicle strikes, outdoor cats, pesticides, rodenticides, and tree work/vegetation management during the nesting season when baby birds in hidden nests are unable to escape danger or are abandoned by parents scared by the noise and proximity of humans.

This is why education is a pillar of the programme. Our hope is, that by involving residents in a fun, informative way, highlighting the dangers birds face, and identifying simple steps we can each take to be more Bird Friendly, we will make Lions Bay a safer place for our birds.

We invited other groups to join us in our May event. In all, eight groups participated: Bear Smart (Lions Bay is one of only ten Bear Smart communities in BC), the Átl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound Biosphere Region Initiative, the Native Plant Garden/ Butterflyway Project, the Trailblazers, the Seniors Social Circle, the village's scholarship committee, and Wild Birds Unlimited in North Vancouver. The West Vancouver Foundation provided

a Neighbourhood Small Grant.

Several activities were offered beginning with a build-a-birdhouse session, led by local author Rod Baker, and bird-oriented art projects for kids. They also dissected owl pellets! Accompanying parents were treated to fresh baked goodies and organic Bird Friendly coffee.

Next up was a family-friendly hike to see our eaglets in their nest followed by BBQ burgers and a walk to the Native Plant Garden to learn about the cultural uses of indigenous plants from Tiffany Brunke of Squamish Environment Society's Bird Friendly City project.

Another fun moment was the announcement of the village's favourite bird after a two-week voting period. No surprise there – the much-loved Anna's Hummingbird



Harry, Riley and Katrina dissecting an owl pellet.

won with 23% of the vote.

This is just the beginning of an ongoing initiative and next year we'll celebrate birds and all the other important "Bs" again – bears, biodiversity, berry bushes, and butterflies. We'll be adding bats and bees in 2023. For more information, visit lionsbay-birdfriendly.ca. 🐦

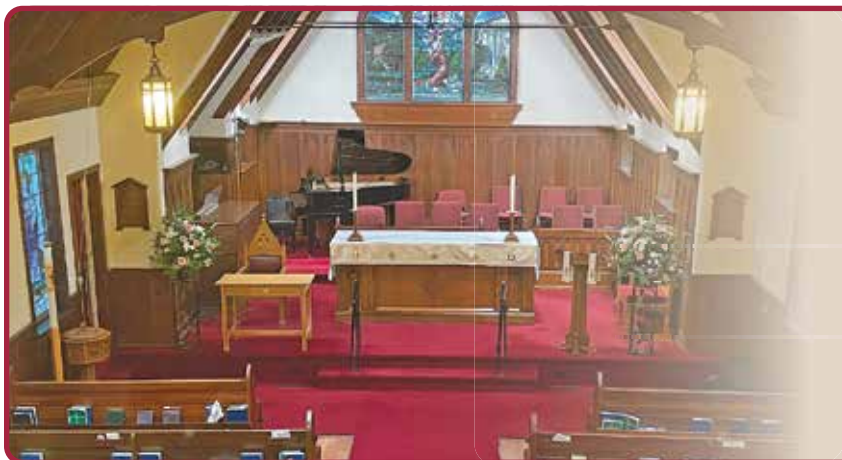


Little Ines made a bird mask.



Photos: courtesy of Danielle Wills

Feeding time for the eaglets in May. Sadly, during the following week both eaglets died for unknown reasons.



We are seeking A Music Director

Our parish family, glorious choir, Steinway grand piano and excellent acoustics are waiting to welcome you!

FOR DETAILS, VISIT www.stfrancisinthewood.ca

ST. FRANCIS IN THE WOOD CHURCH