The Urban Bird: Promoting and Protecting Urban Nesters, Migrants, and Residents

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Why Urban Birds?

• Birds are uniquely suited to populate urban habitats.

• Many species face severe habitat loss/degradation in their traditional environments.

• It is easiest to conserve species when we can closely monitor them.

• The urban environment provides an excellent opportunity for conservation (of some species).
Proposition 1
Incentivize building styles that create urban habitat & minimize conflict, e.g.

- Tax breaks via LEED, LBC, PH (already in place) or new designations:
  - Encourage wildlife to use “dead” rooftops.
  - Strategic usage of wood.
  - Minimization of concrete.
GWGulls nest on vacant rooftops in Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Seattle, et al.

See:
- Kroc (2018), Reproductive ecology of urban-nesting GWGulls, Marine Ornithology.
- Kroc (2018), Year-round nest fidelity in urban GWGulls, BC Birds, J. of the BCFO.
- Blight, Bertram, & Kroc, UAV-based techniques to census urban-nesting gulls, (under review).
- Kroc, Blight, & Cao (in prep.)
Minimize conflict with an ecologically informed built-environment.

GWGull @ Robson & Cardero

GWGull @ Hastings & Nicola

GWGull @ Pender & Abbott
Strategic wood trimming for aerial insectivores.
Proposition 2

Incorporate urban habitat creation into infrastructure creation and improvement; e.g.

- Avoid excessive concrete.
- When bridges must be built, make them metal-framed (not concrete-based).
- Widen breakwaters and auto/train jetties.
Resident and migratory songbirds use city “junk” greenery for nesting.
Small road/train bridges valuable (and safe) breeding habitat for aerial insectivores.

Cliff Swallows in Winnipeg, MB
Highway bridges can be vital (and safe) breeding habitat for cormorants & gulls.
Pelagic Cormorants @ Burrard St. (now netted) & Granville St. Bridges

(See poster for more details!)
Widen auto/train jetties to create shorebird nesting habitat.

Black Oystercatcher eggs and chicks @ Tsawwassen jetty

Kroc & Cao (in prep.)
Proposition 3
Create safe nesting habitat in city parks and ponds, e.g.

– Nestboxes for aerial insectivores.
– Virtual snags & aeries for raptors.
– Inaccessible islets for waterbirds.
Nestboxes for aerial insectivores.

Tree Swallow @ Delta, BC

Purple Martin @ Mayne Is.
Create virtual snags & aeries for birds of prey.

Ospreys @ Waterfront Park, Kelowna
Build inaccessible islets in city ponds/lakes.

Roberts Lake: Former and Future Heermann’s Gull Home

Heermann's Gulls @ Seaside, CA

Arctic Terns, Mew Gulls, & Canada Geese nesting @ Westchester Lagoon, Anchorage, AK
Challenges

• **Challenge 1**: Urban habitats are *not* human-only habitats.

• **Challenge 2**: With so many people, *education* is crucial to maximize conservation opportunities while minimizing human-wildlife conflict.

• **Challenge 3**: Visibility bias: “*If I see seagulls everyday, then why do they need conserving?*”
Advantages

- **Advantage 1**: Easy to monitor species when they live where we live.

- **Advantage 2**: Can be easier to convince people to care when they can *see and interact with* the species in question.

- **Advantage 3**: Relatively little political maneuvering required; e.g. does *not* necessarily require the creation of protected lands or restrictions on industry.
Thank You!

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