

The London Plan and Animals

The London Plan discusses animals in Part 6 environmental policies for species at risk, significant wildlife habitat, and fish habitat. But we share our urban landscape and built environment with a rich array of animals that can be impacted by development and planning decisions. Unfortunately this usually becomes an issue only after a development is in place and a conflict arises between humans and animals.

City Council set a good direction for dealing with these conflicts in November 2014 with the endorsement of a *Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy*, which states that:

- The city is committed to upholding high standards of animal welfare, including the humane treatment of wildlife; and
- The city will make all reasonable efforts to avoid displacing, injuring or killing wild animals.

Yet there are ways in which the interests of animals can and should be integrated into the planning process, and hopefully avoid conflict situations in the first place. At a minimum, this would be modifying the environmental impact and development review process to account for impacts on animals and animal communities.

Cutting down a woodlot, for example, kills or displaces animals. There needs to be analytic tools or methods to assess this impact and require mitigation measures. Simply taking several days to look for nests and pre-stress lets animals know that their environment is changing and gives them time to relocate. Ottawa has developed planning policies that take this type of impact on animals into account. Toronto has Bird Friendly Development Guidelines for highrises that recommend design standards such as visual markers on glass that greatly reduce the number of birds flying into the windows.

Part 8 of the London Plan at section 3.0 talks about Planning and Development Applications. Under number 5 there is a list of potential impacts to be considered, which include:

- a) Traffic
- b) Noise
- c) Parking
- d) Emissions
- e) Lighting
- f) Garbage
- g) Loss of privacy
- h) Shading
- i) Visual impact
- j) Loss of views
- k) Loss of trees and canopy cover
- l) Impact on cultural heritage resources

Analysis of the impact on animals and animal communities should be added to this list.