

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to request to appear in-person as a delegate at the Monday November 1, 2021 meeting of the City of London Planning and Environment Committee.

I would like to speak to the Committee on behalf of the London Bird Team to present our report from Global Bird Rescue, a week-long community science event that took place earlier this month to collect data on bird-window collisions across the City (see report attached as a PDF). I would like to discuss the status of London's Bird Friendly Skies Program, including updates to the Site Plan Control By-law that have been delayed until 2022. I will also deliver a certificate from Nature Canada to City Hall in honour of London's recent certification as one of Canada's first Bird-Friendly Cities.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this request.

Thank you,

Brendon Samuels

Coordinator, London Bird Team

Member, EEPAC

PhD Candidate, Department of Biology

The Advanced Facility for Avian Research

The University of Western Ontario



November 1, 2021

To the City of London Planning and Environment Committee,

Earlier this fall, the [London Bird Team](#) organized a group of volunteers to participate in [Global Bird Rescue](#), an annual event led by [FLAP Canada](#) that is dedicated to raising awareness of bird-window collisions. Collisions with windows on buildings are estimated to kill [25 million birds](#) in Canada each year. From September 27 to October 3, 2021, volunteer members of the public collected data on collisions that occurred in neighbourhoods throughout London, Ontario.

Please find attached to this letter a report summarizing data that were collected in London during Global Bird Rescue. Overall, the team documented 99-bird window collisions at buildings in London, including 94 birds killed and 5 birds injured. These data represent a snapshot of the birds affected by collisions with building windows in London. Historical records of collisions include bird Species at Risk that are protected under Ontario's Endangered Species Act.

In [November 2019](#), and then again in [November 2020](#), the Planning and Environment Committee passed motions acknowledging upcoming work by Development Services staff to update the Site Plan Control By-law C.P.-1455-541 incorporating bird-friendly building design requirements for all new site plans. At the time of the project's initial presentation, a representative from the London Development Institute expressed their support. However, the proposed work on the By-law has not yet materialized. The latest update provided by Heather McNeely, Manager, Current Development, on September 24, 2021 said: "*Planning and Development is undertaking a review of the department's 2022 work program, which includes the review of bird-friendly matters specific to Site Plan Control.*" It is worth noting that several of the buildings that killed birds during Global Bird Rescue finished construction after 2019. Meanwhile, new development with untreated window glass is proceeding across the City, further exacerbating the risk of bird-window collisions and cumulative impacts on natural heritage.

**We urge the City to resume work on updating the Site Plan Control By-law in 2022**, following the example of the City of Toronto where bird-friendly building design has been required by law since 2007, and other municipalities that have published guidelines such as [Ottawa](#) and [New York City](#). **Furthermore, we urge the City to facilitate public communications via their website and in other media regarding solutions for preventing bird-window collisions**, such as available bird-friendly glass materials for new construction, window retrofits, and turning off nonessential artificial lights at night. As the risk of collisions with windows poses a persistent threat to birds, communications from the City about prevention should reoccur semi-annually during bird migration periods in spring and fall.

The City of London has an important role to play in conserving birds as part of natural heritage through meaningful policy updates for new development and by participating in public education about bird conservation issues. London became one of the first municipalities in the country to be certified as a Bird-Friendly City by Nature Canada earlier this year. Now, it is time for the City and community to double down on addressing leading threats to birds in the built environment.

Regards,

Brendon Samuels  
Coordinator, London Bird Team

# Global Bird Rescue 2021 Report for London, Ontario

Prepared by Brendon Samuels, London Bird Team Coordinator | October 13, 2021



**Upper:** [Yellow-billed cuckoo](#), killed by a building in downtown London. **Bottom left:** [Cedar Waxwing](#), rescued at Western University. **Bottom Right:** Injured [Golden-crowned Kinglet](#) found in downtown London.

## Executive Summary

Between September 27 and October 3, 2021 a team of 11 volunteers from various neighbourhoods in London, Ontario participated in [Global Bird Rescue](#), an annual event dedicated to raising awareness of bird-window collisions through organized building surveys. Volunteers documented dead birds and “rescued” survivors. The team for Global Bird Rescue recorded a total of 99 bird-window collisions in London during this period. The data from this event are summarized in this report with recommendations for next steps to understand and mitigate the risk of bird-window collisions in London.

## Acknowledgement

Thank you to the volunteers listed below, members of the public who submitted data and to Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre for supporting the London Bird Team’s participation in Global Bird Rescue.

## Volunteer List for Global Bird Rescue 2021

- Glenn Berry
- Claire Bottini
- Ruth Dickau
- Adriana Diez
- Stacey Jaczko
- Jen MacRae
- Andrea McCallum
- Lynda McCallum
- Paul Nicholson
- Brendon Samuels (Team coordinator)
- Aditya Thaker

## Method

Volunteers independently monitored buildings located along [9 separate walking routes throughout the City of London](#) from September 27 to October 3, 2021. In total, 52 buildings were covered by the monitoring including buildings on campuses at Western University, Fanshawe College and downtown. The frequency of monitoring was not regular (i.e., volunteers were free to walk their route whenever they wanted, but morning checks were encouraged). Each building was checked at least twice over the week. During this period, data were also submitted by members of the public using [birdmapper.org](#) or [iNaturalist.ca](#) or by contacting the team coordinator.

Where dead birds were recovered, volunteers removed them and placed them away from the buildings. Data were double checked to eliminate redundancies from carcasses being found by multiple monitors. Live birds were captured, if possible, and transported to Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre. Data were entered into [birdmapper.org](#) as well as [iNaturalist.ca](#) for species identification.

## Results

In total, 99 bird-window collisions spanning at least 27 species were documented in London by volunteers and the public during Global Bird Rescue (Table 1). Of these, 94 birds were found dead below windows, and 5 birds were found injured. Of the birds that were injured, 2 were sent to Salthaven and 3 were unable to be captured or flew away. Photographic evidence, location information and notes for each observation are available on [iNaturalist](#) as part of the *Bird Mortality in London, Middlesex, Ontario* collections project and in FLAP Canada’s Global Bird Collision Mapper database (Figure 1).

Table 1. List of species found as window collision victims during Global Bird Rescue 2021. Asterisks indicate individual birds that were found alive, rescued and sent to Salthaven.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Count</b>
American Goldfinch	3*	Northern Parula	1
American Robin	2	Ovenbird	1
American Redstart	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
American Woodcock	1	Red-eyed Vireo	1
Bay-breasted Warbler	1	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	4
Black-throated Blue Warbler	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1
Black-throated Green Warbler	1	Song Sparrow	1
Blackpoll Warbler	2	Swainson's Thrush	3
Blue-headed Vireo	1	Tennessee Warbler	6
Cedar Waxwing	11*	White-throated Sparrow	6
Common Yellowthroat	1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3
European Starling	1	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet*	4	<b>Species unknown</b>	
Hermit Thrush	1	Perching Birds	17
House Sparrow	1	New World Warblers	7
Mourning Dove	4	Sparrow	3
Nashville Warbler	3	Thrush	3

**Total: 99 birds**

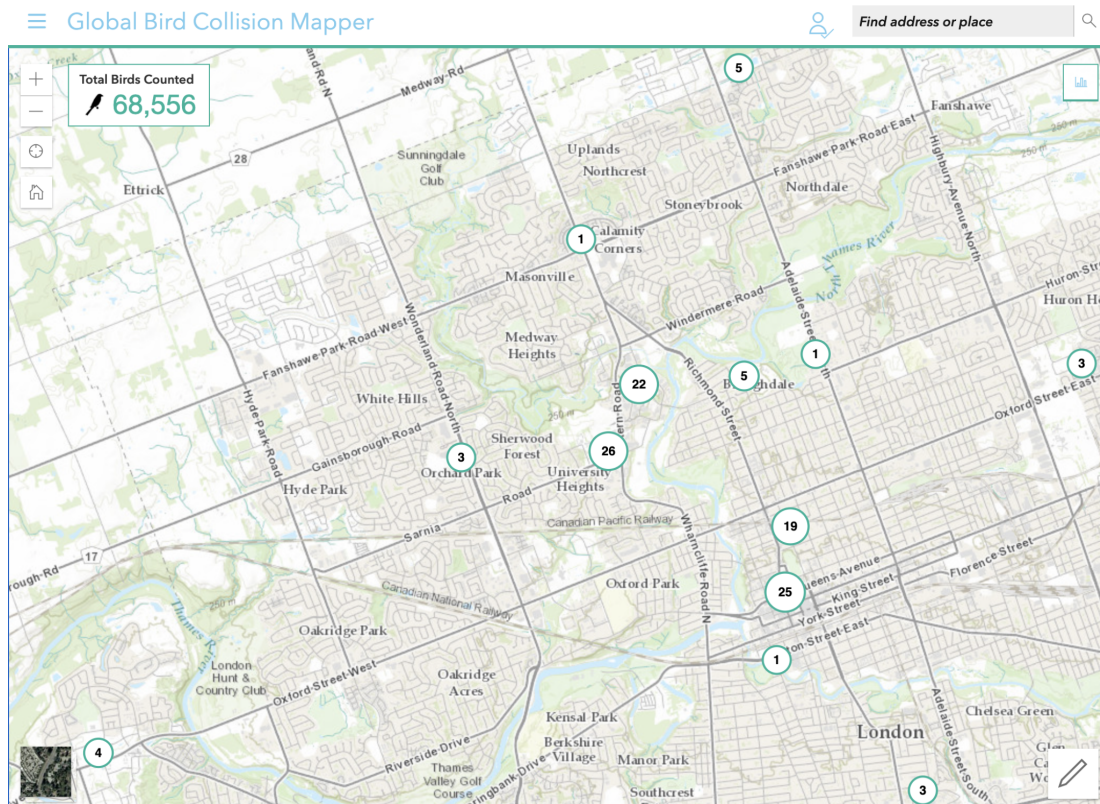


Figure 1. Clusters of bird-window collisions documented in London, ON by participants and members of the public during Global Bird Rescue. Map obtained from [birdmapper.org](http://birdmapper.org).

## Discussion

Our data provide a snapshot of bird-window collisions that occur in London during fall bird migration. It is likely that many more collisions occurred than were documented during the event, since only a small fraction of window collisions are observed or reported. FLAP Canada and [scientific research](#) suggest that most bird-window collisions occur at residential homes, but the team for Global Bird Rescue monitored only commercial and institutional buildings in London. Casual building monitoring began earlier in September and has continued following the conclusion of the Global Bird Rescue event. [Click here](#) to view over 440 iNaturalist records of bird collision mortality in London spanning over 80 species.

Given that most bird collisions occurred at buildings that feature large, reflective plate glass windows, it is likely that these collisions occurred during daytime and may be attributed to birds mistaking reflections for extensions of their habitat or open space. In some locations such as One London Place, artificial lights at night from inside or surrounding the building may have played a role in disorienting birds during their nocturnal migration through the downtown core.

## Recommendations

1. The City of London should update the Site Plan Control By-law C.P.-1455-541 and require bird-friendly building design in all new site plans, so that new building construction does not contribute to bird window collision mortality in London. We recommend that site plan requirements should be made consistent with the [CSA A460 Bird Friendly Building Design standard \(2019\)](#).
2. Overall, more public education is needed in London, Ontario to raise awareness of the risk of bird-window collisions and available solutions (i.e., turning off non-essential lights at night during bird migration periods, window retrofits and bird-friendly building design). Currently there is little communication from the municipality about reducing light pollution and window treatments for preventing bird-window collisions. We recommend that the City of London should do more to contribute to public education by developing an informative [webpage](#), printing [information pamphlets](#), sharing relevant information via other City communications and retrofitting high-risk city-owned building windows based on consultation with subject experts on City of London advisory committees.
3. Future monitoring for bird-window collisions in London should continue checks of buildings along the survey routes followed for Global Bird Rescue 2021, especially where bird collisions were documented frequently. Collision risk may vary between spring and fall in terms of which bird species are affected and by location. As human resources allow, monitoring could expand to include [other suspected high-risk buildings](#).
4. Further data collection is needed to identify locations of additional high-risk windows in the London downtown area and at Fanshawe College. Collision data has [already been](#) collected for buildings at Western University and its affiliate campuses.
5. Data on bird-window collisions may be useful for informing plans to target window retrofits at the most dangerous windows on existing buildings. In some cases, reducing vegetation adjacent to the building to deter birds might be preferable to retrofitting windows. Information about records of collision mortality at individual buildings and available solutions can be sent to property managers using [a letter template](#). Relationships should be established with property management at high-risk buildings.
6. To improve the accuracy of monitoring surveys, property management and maintenance workers should be notified in advance of the monitoring period so that dead or injured birds can be left in place and/or documented. Circulating information about Global Bird Rescue and contact information for the organizer(s) would be beneficial.