



KEEP CATS SAFE & SAVE BIRD LIVES in GUELPH

Guelph (September 20, 2016) – Canada’s bird and cat populations are in trouble, and a coalition of Guelph groups working with Nature Canada's Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives campaign are calling on the community to help keep both safe by keeping cats from roaming outdoors unsupervised.

The group represents a unique local coalition of cat-care and nature organizations speaking with a unified voice; the Guelph Humane Society, the Guelph Cat Population Task Force, Nature Guelph, Wild Ontario, Songbird Only Avian Rehabilitation, Wild Birds Unlimited and Nature Canada, the oldest conservation charity in Canada.

The group is asking the Guelph community to participate in an online poll at <http://goo.gl/7azLs8> to share what they think about the issues for cats and birds.

Guelph has more than 200 species of birds, including many that are designated as species at risk, as well as favourites such as cardinals and gold finches. All over Canada, birds are in trouble; some species have declined by more than 90%. On top of the declines attributed to habitat destruction and climate change, an estimated 270 million birds die each year because of human causes such as collisions with windows and buildings, and hunting by cats. Everyone can play a role in protecting birds.

Cat owners have a special role to play in protecting both cats and birds. Unsupervised outdoor cats are exposed to a variety of threats, including infectious diseases, parasites, vehicle collisions, fights with wildlife and other cats and getting lost. And while the return-to-owner rate in Guelph is more than three times the national average, only 15-20% of stray cats brought to the GHS are reclaimed by their owner. Thankfully, there are great alternatives to keeping pet cats safe, which include outdoor options such as catios, cat enclosures and harness-walking, as well as indoor strategies such as providing scratching posts, window perches, toys and interactive play.

"Many people vastly overestimate the ability of cats to survive life outdoors on their own," said Dr. Shane Bateman, member of the board of the Guelph Humane Society and a driving force behind the Guelph Cat Population Task Force, "and we have an environmental responsibility to protect our bird populations. This initiative is exciting because it offers an opportunity to inform the public about the risks to both cats and birds."

“While cats’ independent natures might lead some people to leave them outside

unsupervised, we owe them the same level of care we give our dogs,” said Eleanor Fast, Executive Director for Nature Canada. “Keeping a cat from roaming freely, providing safe outdoor options or sufficient stimulation indoors, is what they deserve. Therefore, we are challenging Guelph cat owners to take Nature Canada’s [pledge](#) in support of protecting both cats and birds.”

This initiative is the start of a larger awareness campaign that will include presentations and displays, advertising, community outreach and various other activities in Guelph. Visit www.catsandbirds.ca/guelph to stay abreast of our plans as they develop.

Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives is working in tandem with Margaret Atwood, whose graphic novel *Angel Catbird* was released September 6, 2016. The first in a series of three, *Angel Catbird* tells the tale of a combination cat-bird-human, a "walking, talking carnivore's dilemma" (from Atwood's introduction).

“We are honoured to have the support of Margaret Atwood and all of our Guelph partners in this important local campaign,” said Eleanor Fast. She added, “We could not do our work to raise awareness of critical conservation and species issues if it were not for the individuals and organizations who give so generously to Nature Canada year after year.”

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Keep Cats Safe and Save Bird Lives is a coalition of individuals and organizations concerned about the well-being of cats and birds. It is led by Nature Canada and is supported financially by the Gosling Foundation, Fuller Landau, LLP, The Crabtree Foundation, The Walrus, Indigo, Environment Canada, Pets Plus Us and Toronto Life. For more information about this campaign or to see a full list of national, regional and local partners please visit catsandbirds.ca or naturecanada.ca

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