

## 30 Years!

**W**hat is FLAP Canada celebrating? Obviously not the deaths of untold numbers of birds due to human-related causes. We are deeply saddened about that. We are celebrating the fact our organization and many others now exist to protect birds from one of the greatest causes of mortality: collisions with human-built structures.

We are celebrating the growing

numbers of people of all ages who care: our amazing volunteers, founding members and partners, and anyone who has ever rescued a bird, written a social media post, made a donation or contributed to wildlife conservation.

We are celebrating the homeowners, apartment and condo dwellers, businesses, corporate and institutional buildings, and many others that have retrofitted their

### TOUCHING DOWN, SPRING 2023

Editor: Irene Fedun  
Art Director: Bea Paterson  
Copy Editor: Vicki Soon-Ai Low  
Contributors: Kyle Horner  
Dale A. Lombardi  
Illustrators: Barry Kent MacKay  
Bea Paterson  
Photographers: Kaitlin Brough  
Feather Friendly®  
Yuko Miki  
Becky Plant



Photograph by BECKY PLANT

*On March 31, 2023, FLAP volunteers laid out over 4,000 dead birds found in the Greater Toronto Area in 2022. This event marked the 30th anniversary of the founding meeting of FLAP Canada.*

windows to make them look like a barrier to birds.

We are celebrating the governments that have enacted policies and bylaws that urge or force builders to make new construction bird-safe.

We are celebrating the scientists, educational institutions and industry professionals that have developed viable solutions to the problem.

Together we have scaled mountains (or maybe skyscrapers). Is there more to be done? Always. But let's take this opportunity to highlight the recent, significant work of some of our partners, collaborators and donors, supported by the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) Canada and our 30 years of experience and hard-won expertise in the field of bird-collision prevention.

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued from page 1*

## FEATHER FRIENDLY®

One of our longest-standing and most productive relationships has been with Feather Friendly, which in 2006 developed one of the first collision-deterrent window films. They are now on the eighth generation of this product, always looking to improve quality and durability. They've done countless retrofits in the Greater Toronto Area, across Canada and the United States, and internationally. Of note was the recent customized installation at a five-storey, glass-walled walkway in Toronto: black markers in the shape of the Ontario trillium logo.

Feather Friendly has retrofitted homes, multi-storey office buildings, university and other institutional structures, even glass railings – a huge cause of bird death. Recent successes include installations at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the L.L.Bean head offices.

Feather Friendly has worked closely with FLAP as we've refined our knowledge of when, where and why birds collide with buildings. In addition, we appreciate their generosity in donating the use of their space for storage and our annual layout, and many other services.

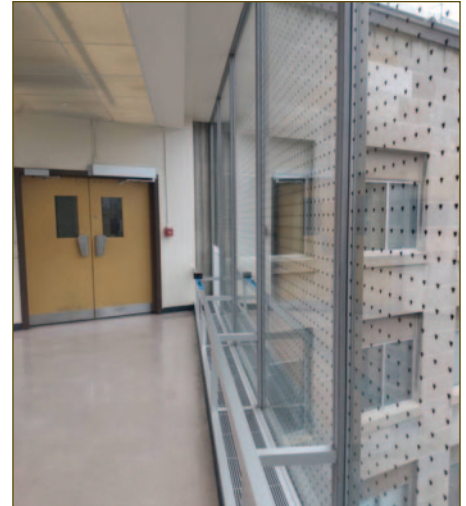
## NATURE CANADA

FLAP has worked with many environmental groups, such as the New York City Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy. For the past few years, Nature Canada has been one of our staunchest allies, offering financial aid for our annual Global Bird Rescue week.

FLAP Canada's executive director, Michael Measure, sits on the National Advisory Committee of Nature Canada's *Bird Friendly City: A Certification Program*. The designation is awarded to cities that fulfill specific criteria or actions based on three categories: reducing human-related threats to birds; habitat protection, restoration and climate resiliency; and community outreach and education. Nature Canada assesses each candidate on their performance on key issues, such as mitigating collisions with windows and reducing predation by domestic cats. To date, 16 cities have received the designation, from small centres such as Saanich, B.C., to large metropolitan areas with bird-friendly development guidelines such as Calgary, Alberta.

## ESRI CANADA

Much has been written about the pioneering technology that Esri Canada developed for FLAP, known as the *Global Bird Collision Mapper*. It enables anyone anywhere to record the time and location of a bird-building strike, thus contributing to a growing international database used by scientists to help preserve vulnerable bird species. Top computer technicians at ESRI Canada donated hundreds of hours of their time and expertise to this project in addition to the software and in-kind donations the company gave FLAP over the life of the original app. Since millions of bird-window collisions, especially at homes, go unrecorded, the creation of the Mapper was revolutionary,



Photograph courtesy FEATHER FRIENDLY®

*A recent interior application by Feather Friendly® on a Toronto skywalk "fly-through zone", where reflection is not the issue but where birds can see through to the other side and are unable to discern the glass in their path*

demonstrating with increasing clarity how critical mitigation of the window-strike issue is to bird conservation.

## ROB TONUS

"As one of the founders of the Fatal Light Awareness Program, I'm pleased to see the organization continuing to save lives 30 years later.

We achieved many amazing successes in the early years – forming the first organization of its kind, getting media attention across the country about this unseen tragedy, and even being featured in an episode of *The Nature of Things*!

We successfully lobbied the CN Tower to turn off its blinding white lights! Now Torontonians and visitors can enjoy coloured light shows throughout the year and birds are safer.

Our efforts prompted people who care about birds to start similar groups throughout North America.

I wish everyone who champions the needs of birds great success in the coming decades."





## Blessed Be the Animals

Since the Cathedral of St. James in Toronto offers a service to bless animals, the church obviously cares about all creatures great and small. Therefore, it should not be harming wild birds, even unintentionally. So

thought FLAP volunteer Caroline Nash.

Glass railings were installed on the east side of the cathedral. Caroline and another FLAP volunteer, Yuko Miki, saw several traumatic collisions of birds with the glass and felt it was imperative that something be done to prevent further deaths. The reflective and transparent railings are placed in ways that suit humans, but they wreak havoc for birds that see the reflection of trees from St. James' Park or perceive no barrier at all. In one instance, Caroline saw an American Woodcock hit the railing in one place, bounce back, hit the railing in another spot, and then fly into a window in the main building with such force that it died at her feet. Yuko found a dead Wood Thrush, a species at risk.

Caroline approached property manager Jim Kotsifas to make the church aware of the enormity of the problem and offered suggestions to rectify it. Jim was concerned, but mentioned that lack of funds was the issue, so Caroline and Yuko offered to install bird-safe markers for the railing portion and make it a community project. A FLAP Canada staff member kindly offered two boxes of Feather Friendly® markers and the company donated a few more boxes. Caroline and Yuko

spent five hours installing the markers on the outdoor panels. The clear glass windows on the main building still need to be retrofitted.

As Yuko says, "We both live in the neighbourhood and we care about the community. We are active in our community Facebook group, spreading awareness of bird collisions by alerting people to the start of migration seasons, reposting FLAP info, asking people in the neighbourhood to report birds that have died from collisions and reaching out to buildings about our concerns."

Jim agrees that the cathedral needs to take responsibility for the problem.



*Caroline Nash installing the markers.*



*The completed installation of Feather Friendly bird-collision deterrent markers on the glass railing at St. James Cathedral in Toronto*



*One easy way to prevent birds like this Yellow Warbler from hitting railings is to install Feather Friendly's Black Markers for Fly-through: [shop.featherfriendly.com](http://shop.featherfriendly.com).*

Photograph by YUKO MIKI

Photograph by YUKO MIKI

Photograph by KAITLIN BROUGH

The background of the page features a stylized illustration. At the bottom is a white silhouette of a city skyline against a dark blue background. Above the skyline, the sky is a gradient of blue, transitioning from a lighter blue on the left to a darker blue on the right. In the lighter blue area, there are white, starburst-like cracks in the sky, with white feathers and bird silhouettes falling from them. In the darker blue area, there are small white stars and a single white bird in flight. The title "Holes in the" is written in large, white, sans-serif font across the top of the illustration.

# Holes in the

They started their day  
like every other —  
unfolding their wings,  
lifting off,  
trusting the sky,  
never suspecting  
that the very air would  
have walls —  
a tragic tease,  
walls that reflect the sky.

Surely  
there are softer ways  
to die  
than for glass and steel  
to stop your air.

If only they could have  
drifted tenderly  
from this life,  
as in sleep,  
or been carried

to the ground  
on the backs of other birds,  
as in a dream.  
But instead, they hit hard  
and fell fast,

bleeding feathers  
all the way down —  
sometimes fifty stories down —  
beauty and song trailing behind  
in their wake.

And now this flock  
of the fallen  
lies in a ghostly mandala,  
an annual display  
of thousands of corpses

laid out in concentric circles  
on the cold marble floor.  
Small birds and large,  
pointed beaks and hooked.  
Tufted crowns, fretted wings.

Backs and breasts splashed  
yellow, red.  
Striped black.  
Tiny tongues forever silenced  
of whistles and chirps and tweets.

Breathless beauties wreathed  
in a silence that spirals upward  
and outward, filling  
the great rotunda  
with hush.

With head bowed,  
I shuffle along  
behind the velvet rope  
past wheels of warblers,  
kestrels, kinglets, hawks.

All here, but gone,  
each wing still etched  
with its own map of the sky.  
And outside the museum,  
the sky heaves,

# Sky

clutches its pain in its fists.  
Birds rain down now —  
time itself  
falling  
from the sky.

There are holes in the sky  
where birds used to be,  
silence where once  
there was singing.  
This is how it happens  
that the sky loses heart —  
slowly,  
bird by bird,  
feather by falling  
feather.

The skies may be emptying  
but not my eyes.  
And the heavens cry ragged  
up the scale of grief  
on pedestals of air —

I want to cry out too,  
full-throated,  
but there's only hush —  
feathers  
caught in my throat

**Dale A. Lombardi**

*Dale A. Lombardi is a poet and conceptual artist living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. She saw a photograph of FLAP's 2016 layout of dead birds at the Royal Ontario Museum in the Smithsonian Magazine. At first, she couldn't quite understand what she was looking at, but once she recognized the dead birds the image haunted her, following her around until she finally "gave it to the page." Like most people, Dale knew that birds hit windows, but she had no sense of the magnitude of the problem.*

*On March 31st, 2023, Dale and her husband, Steve, made the drive up from Connecticut to witness the annual layout in person and attend FLAP's 30th anniversary. Dale read her poem to the 50-plus FLAP supporters present, all of whom were obviously moved.*

*Dale's debut poetry collection, Cloud and Bone, was released in January 2023. To order, visit [finishinglinepress.com](http://finishinglinepress.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). The poem Holes in the Sky will be in her second collection of poetry.*

Illustration by BEA PATERSON



## Species Profile: Savannah Sparrow

If you are a birdwatcher, the sight of a small, brown bird disappearing into long grass likely fills your heart with dread. The sparrow pages of your field guide will be filled with many such birds and, though you may think yours was memorable, leafing through them often generates more questions than answers. These Little Brown Jobs (LBJs for short) are the stuff of birder nightmares.

The Savannah Sparrow fits well within the realm of the LBJ. A quick glimpse will leave nothing but brown streaks on your retinas. As with most sparrows though, a better look reveals that this bird is rather smartly dressed. The white breast and belly are crisply streaked with brown; the brown back is marked with black. The cap and cheeks are brown and flanked with grey or buffy stripes. A bold, yellow spot above each eye is the clincher for a Savannah.

These handsome garments adorn a fairly plump little bird, and a short tail accentuates this impression. Its conical bill is slender for a sparrow and the feathers of its crown are often raised into a slight pompadour. Sparrows have more character than they're given credit for. As proof, the Savannah brims with attitude.

You might expect to find this bird in savannahs but, confusingly, the Savannah Sparrow is named after the city in Georgia and not the habitat. The name is not entirely misleading, though, as this sparrow loves all grassy, open places. It is maybe the least selective of our so-called grassland birds, being equally



at home in meadows, prairies, wetlands, farm fields, ditches and the vacant lot down the street.

If you have never seen a Savannah Sparrow, a springtime stroll in one of the above habitats will likely produce one. They can be tricky to spot though, as they stay close to the ground and are often concealed in the grass. Learning their insect-like song will help. Singing males often perch high in the grass or shrubs, making them relatively easy to see.

As the summer nesting season begins, Savannah Sparrows become even more cryptic. The nest is extremely well hidden, on or near the ground in dense vegetation. Having taken such care to conceal it, the birds are very wary of betraying its location, staying silent and moving under cover. Later in the

summer the young take flight and can be seen bombing from one patch of grass to another, hounding their weary parents for insects they'd rather not scrounge for themselves.

Savannah Sparrows breed across North America, from Alaska to Newfoundland and California to Georgia. There is even a population in central Mexico. Those Mexican birds, along with some in California, stay on their summer haunts year-round, but most of the rest migrate when the weather turns cold. Their wintering range extends across the southern United States, northern Central America and the Caribbean.

Savannah Sparrows are common throughout their range, but like all of our migrating songbirds, often fall victim to window collisions on their journeys. Changes in their grassland habitats are starting to cause some declines. Untreated windows place unnecessary pressure on this otherwise hardy species.

If you should encounter an LBJ as you walk through a grassy area this spring, don't fret. As you peer through the grasses, straining your eyes for signs of movement, you may just spot a set of beady eyes staring back at you. If they are flanked by a pair of vibrant yellow spots, you'll know you've encountered the dapper but furtive Savannah Sparrow. You won't even need to crack the book.

### **Kyle Horner**

*Kyle is a birder, guide and science communicator from Guelph, Ontario. You can find him on social media at @kyletalksnature.*

Illustration by BARRY KENT MACKAY

# 2022 FLAP Bird-Building Collision Data

Birds recovered by FLAP rescue volunteers around  
200 commercial buildings in the Greater Toronto Area

Species	Alive	Dead	Total	Species	Alive	Dead	Total	Species	Alive	Dead	Total
American Goldfinch	5	9	14	House Sparrow	5	23	28	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	130	300	430
American Kestrel	0	1	1	House Wren	7	5	12	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	91	93
American Redstart	8	20	28	Indigo Bunting	1	8	9	<b>Rusty Blackbird</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
American Robin	8	36	44	Killdeer	0	1	1	Savannah Sparrow	0	4	4
American Tree Sparrow	1	7	8	Least Flycatcher	1	6	7	Scarlet Tanager	0	3	3
American Woodcock	10	23	33	Lincoln's Sparrow	7	14	21	Song Sparrow	9	32	41
Baltimore Oriole	2	6	8	Magnolia Warbler	26	58	84	Swainson's Thrush	8	50	58
Bay-breasted Warbler	14	63	77	Mallard	3	1	4	Swamp Sparrow	10	19	29
Belted Kingfisher	0	3	3	Merlin	0	1	1	Tennessee Warbler	37	154	191
Black-and-white Warbler	21	28	49	Mourning Dove	2	15	17	Veery	0	14	14
Blackburnian Warbler	13	50	63	Mourning Warbler	3	8	11	Virginia Rail	1	1	2
Black-capped Chickadee	9	142	151	Nashville Warbler	73	287	360	Warbling Vireo	0	1	1
Blackpoll Warbler	4	26	30	Northern Cardinal	0	3	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	3	41	44
Black-throated Blue Warbler	17	46	63	Northern Flicker	7	36	43	White-crowned Sparrow	5	15	20
Black-throated Green Warbler	16	32	48	Northern Mockingbird	1	0	1	White-throated Sparrow	102	267	369
Blue Jay	4	33	37	Northern Parula	20	43	63	Wild Turkey	0	1	1
Boreal Chickadee	0	1	1	Northern Saw-whet Owl	0	1	1	Wilson's Warbler	5	15	20
Blue-headed Vireo	2	9	11	Northern Waterthrush	4	22	26	Winter Wren	7	9	16
Brown Creeper	62	87	149	Orange-crowned Warbler	1	10	11	<b>Wood Thrush</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>
Brown Thrasher	3	1	4	Ovenbird	51	98	149	Yellow Warbler	2	8	10
Budgerigar (domestic type)	1	0	1	Palm Warbler	5	16	21	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	0	5	5
<b>Canada Warbler</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	Philadelphia Vireo	0	3	3	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	12	70	82
Cape May Warbler	2	13	15	Pine Warbler	6	7	13	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	0	2	2
Cedar Waxwing	0	3	3	Purple Finch	1	4	5	Yellow-rumped Warbler	31	74	105
Chestnut-sided Warbler	9	18	27	Red-breasted Nuthatch	14	61	75	Unknown species	113	370	483
<b>Chimney Swift</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	Red-eyed Vireo	2	20	22				
Chipping Sparrow	0	5	5	Red-tailed Hawk	1	1	2	<b>Totals</b>	<b>1458</b>	<b>4023</b>	<b>5481</b>
Common Grackle	0	2	2	Red-winged Blackbird	0	12	12				
Common Nighthawk	0	1	1	Ring-billed Gull	1	0	1				
Common Yellowthroat	27	52	79	Rock/Homing Pigeon	3	19	22				
Cooper's Hawk	0	2	2	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	9	22	31				
Dark-eyed Junco	64	276	340								
Downy Woodpecker	1	7	8								
Eastern Bluebird	0	1	1								
Eastern Kingbird	3	0	3								
Eastern Phoebe	1	1	2								
Eastern Towhee	1	3	4								
Eastern Screech Owl	0	1	1								
<b>Eastern Whip-poor-will</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>								
<b>Eastern Wood Pewee</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>								
European Starling	2	14	16								
Field Sparrow	1	7	8								
Flycatcher spp.	3	10	13								
Fox Sparrow	7	36	43								
Golden-crowned Kinglet	358	451	809								
<b>Golden-winged Warbler</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>								
Grasshopper Sparrow	0	1	1								
Gray Catbird	2	15	17								
Green Heron	0	1	1								
Grey-cheeked Thrush	3	11	14								
Hairy Woodpecker	0	2	2								
Hermit Thrush	32	86	118								
Hooded Warbler	0	1	1								
House Finch	1	6	7								

Species new to FLAP:  
Green Heron and Wild Turkey  
Species at risk are in blue and bold.



In 2022, Golden-crowned Kinglets were the most numerous species found. Our volunteers also picked up two live Silver-haired Bats and one dead Big Brown Bat.

Photograph by KAITLIN BROUGH

**JOIN US FOR GLOBAL BIRD RESCUE** October 2-8, 2023

## THANK YOU TO ALL FLAP CANADA DONORS

To the individuals, foundations and companies that supported FLAP in 2022, our deepest appreciation.

**Echo Foundation**

**Hodgson Family Foundation**

**Jackman Foundation**

**Johansen-Larsen Foundation**

**Oakley & Oakley Lawyers**

**The Eric S. Margolis Family Foundation**

**Totem Roasters**



## I Will Support FLAP Canada

☐ I will join **BirdSong, FLAP Canada's Monthly Giving Plan\***

On the 15th of each month, I will give:

☐ \$10   ☐ \$15   ☐ \$20   ☐ \$25   ☐ I prefer \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I will make a single gift of:

☐ \$50   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$150   ☐ \$200   ☐ I prefer \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I've included a signed, voided cheque for my monthly gifts.

☐ I've included my cheque or money order, payable to **FLAP Canada.**

☐ I prefer to use my credit card:

☐ VISA   ☐ MasterCard

Card no. \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Month Year

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title Given name(s) Surname

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street number/name Suite no.

City \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Area code Ext.

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) Canada

P.O. Box 430, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 2J5

Tel.: 416-366-FLAP (3527) • flap@flap.org • flap.org • birdsafe.ca

CRA Charity Number 14074 6736 RR0001

**Your kind donation helps FLAP Canada with its conservation work.**

\*You can change or cancel your participation in the **BirdSong Monthly Giving Plan** at any time by contacting us. Gifts of \$20 or more will automatically be receipted; others by request.