

Melissa Penney

104 species and counting

104 bird species have visited my very urban yard since I began recording this data in 2019. The reason they come to my yard is because of the habitat I've created. The building blocks of that habitat are the 27 trees in my yard. I was fortunate that the very mature ones, 4 spruces and 2 elm trees were already there. As well, an established birch, maple, apple and mayday. The other 17 trees I have planted since I moved here 14 years ago.

I used to joke that everytime someone in my neighbourhood unnecessarily cut down a tree I would plant one. I can't keep up anymore.

13 mature trees cut down



The city does not take good care of the trees we have



Cats kill 100 to 350 million birds per year in Canada.

But our by-laws are too weak and allow cats to roam.

Window strikes kill approximately 42 million birds per year in Canada.

But we have no laws to make windows bird safe.

Now Edmonton wants to take away their food, shelter and ability to procreate by densifying without regard for established ecosystems or planning to plant enough trees to help them in the future.

Why do birds need trees?

Birds forage for food in trees, they seek shelter from the weather in them and they nest in them. Some build nests on trees and others excavate cavities inside them.

Mature trees have more food, have better shelter and big enough diameters to create a nest cavity inside and are tall enough to be attractive to tree nesting species.

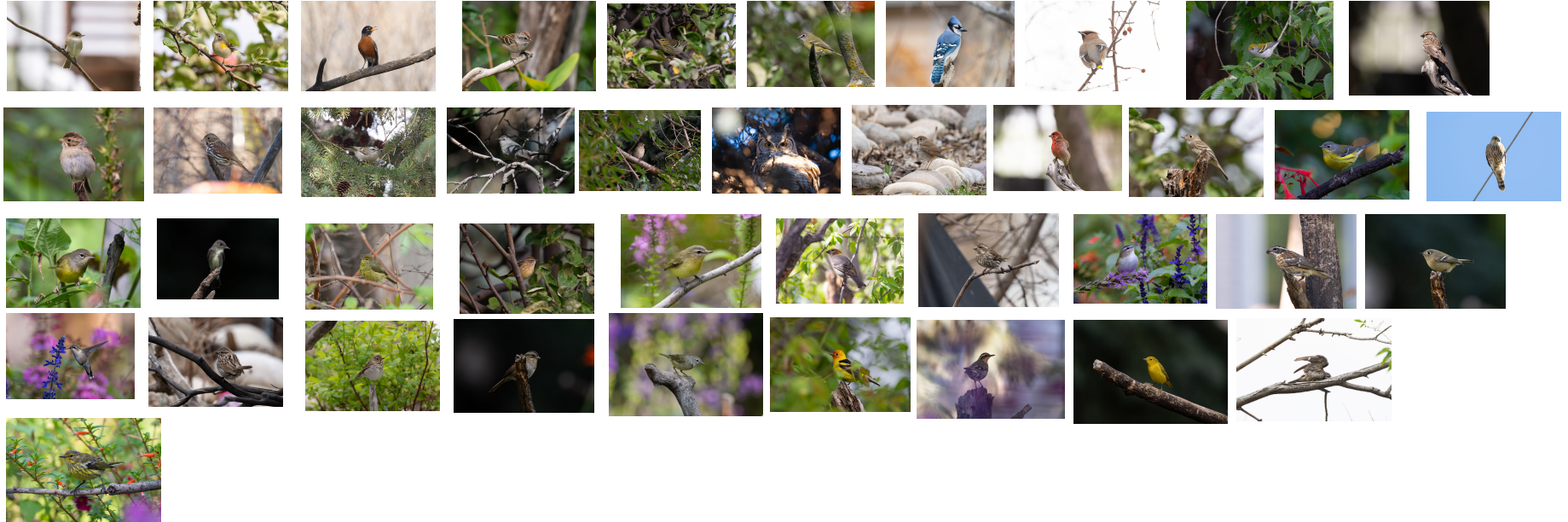
Not all species of trees have soft enough wood for a cavity.

Protecting the trees we have goes a lot farther than planting new ones. Even though that is also integral, species selection will be key.

Cavity nesting birds who have visited my urban yard



Birds who build tree nests who have visited my yard 2024



Some of you might say the need to house a person is more important than a bird. But that isn't true. Birds are a marker of a healthy ecosystem and without a healthy ecosystem our city is not habitable.

Density is possible without sacrificing our long term health as a city. The longterm health of our city depends on city council to finally understand that habitat and biodiversity are throughout our city and preserving mature neighbourhood tree canopy on public and private land are an integral part of that.