

Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Reid Haefer • Craig Johnson • Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores • Sarah Rehder • Andrew Zellers

June 7, 2017

Mayor Edward B. Murray and City Councilmembers
600 4th Ave
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Mayor Murray and Councilmembers:

The Seattle Urban Forestry Commission writes to congratulate Council and the Mayor for their leadership to make Seattle an Urban Bird Treaty City. Birds are an integral part of a high-functioning urban forest and on May 5, Seattle joined more than 25 other cities across the nation that support bird habitat.

The Treaty, a program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, recognizes Seattle's important role in protecting urban habitat along the Pacific Flyway -- a bird migration super highway. By becoming an Urban Bird Treaty city, Seattle fills an important missing link in the program, which already includes San Francisco, Portland, and Anchorage.

Each spring and fall, migratory birds embark on a dangerous journey up and down the Pacific Coast to nesting and wintering areas, using Seattle's urban forest as a critical resting and re-fueling stop. The Urban Bird Treaty Program acknowledges that, in addition to preserving pristine swaths of rural land, it is important to protect, connect, and enhance wildlife habitat within our cities, like our urban forest, to preserve and maintain bird species.

In addition to the City of Seattle, Treaty partnership includes Seattle Parks and Recreation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Audubon Washington, Heron Habitat Helpers, and Seattle Audubon. The partnership will develop programs to reduce the hazards to migrating birds, protect and maintain habitat and connect residents with natural areas within our city.

As the City's urban forestry team prepares for next year's Urban Forest Stewardship Plan update, the Commission encourages the City of Seattle to take a leadership role in protecting our urban forest as important bird habitat and recommends the following actions:

1. Based on the results of the 2016 Canopy Cover Assessment, re-evaluate overarching canopy cover goals in support of a healthy urban forest that will support healthy bird habitat along the Pacific flyway.

2. Consider initiatives that would reduce hazards to birds such as keeping cats indoors and dogs on leashes, reduced pesticide use, increase bird protection during nesting season, lights-out programs, and encouraging bird-friendly architecture.
3. Increase protection for critical natural areas that serve as essential bird habitat within our parks and neighborhoods as they face increasing pressure from invasive species, competing uses, and the impacts of climate change.

In closing, the Commission urges the Mayor and City Council to play an active role in celebrating and building upon the success of Seattle becoming an Urban Bird Treaty city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Early". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Early".

Tom Early, Chair

cc: Jessica Finn Coven, Jesús Aguirre, Michelle Caulfield, Robert Stowers, Doug Critchfield, Jon Jainga, Barb DeCaro, Urban Forestry Core Team, Dionne Foster, Aaron Blumenthal, Eric McConaghy.

Sandra Pinto de Bader, Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator
City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability & Environment
PO Box 94729 Seattle, WA 98124-4729 Tel: 206-684-3194 Fax: 206-684-3013
www.seattle.gov/UrbanForestryCommission