



Toronto Ornithological Club

July 4, 2022

We at the Toronto Ornithological Club would like to register our deep alarm at some of the provisions within the proposed changes to Toronto's animal bylaw.

While our organization commends the spirit in which the [Animal Bylaw](#) has been amended to improve the coexistence of humans and wildlife and to enhance animal welfare, there are two parts of the proposed amendment that we believe will undermine these aims:

- 1) The exception to animal feeding that allows for managed colonies of feral/stray cats.
- 2) The exception to the prohibition of free-roaming pets for cats.

These parts of the amendment that allow for free roaming pet and feral cats, will have stunningly disastrous implications for Toronto's wild bird species. The academic literature on this topic is more than clear. For years, [a mounting pile of evidence](#) has demonstrated that outdoor cats (both owned and feral) are the single largest cause of mortality for wild birds. Outdoor cats are a main cause of the significant bird declines seen across North America over the last century, and we are currently in a crisis situation where a [third of wild birds have disappeared](#) from North America since 1970.

You state that you met with key stakeholders in drafting these policies; but the ornithological community was not consulted about the impacts that the proposed measures will have on wild birds (and other small wildlife). Toronto was recently deemed a [Bird-Friendly City by Nature Canada](#), and has thriving populations of wild bird species. The City of Toronto has historically supported efforts to preserve this part of our natural heritage and identity. Examples include sponsoring the [Bird Friendly Building Guidelines](#), supporting the [Toronto Bird Celebration](#), and putting out the [Birds of Toronto](#) book as part of the Toronto Biodiversity Series. It would be a shame for all that effort and support to be rendered completely moot.

Cats are a domesticated species, and are not native to Toronto. The thousands of individual cats already roaming the city are causing devastation to our local ecology. What natural system could possibly withstand the artificial addition of thousands of non-native predators? If you would like changes to the bylaw to reflect any respect for the nature in our city; we truly hope you will reconsider how this piece of policy treats outdoor cats.

Thank you for your consideration,

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On behalf of the Toronto Ornithological Club Council