



TORONTO ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

November 26, 2024

To Infrastructure and Environment Committee, City of Toronto Item

2024. IE 18.10 Toronto Island's Environmentally Significant Areas (Ward 10) Nov. 27, 2024

Needed: Budget Commitment towards Master Plan Promises on Island habitat

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Ornithological Club (TOC). Our club was established in 1934 and our many members are passionate about all things related to birds and birding. Throughout the year, TOC conducts bird walks that are open to the public to share our knowledge and appreciation of Toronto's bird population with each passing season. Our members also record our observations into citizen science databases, such as eBird, so that the population and diversity of birds can be monitored over the decades. It is well known that the population of grassland birds and aerial insectivores, such as swallows & swifts, are in steep decline. Birds are proverbial "canaries in a coal mine". Any steep declines in bird populations reflect declines in the quality of their habitat and by association, the biodiversity of that habitat.

Toronto is fortunate to have a waterfront and ravine system with many parks to provide its citizens with natural beauty, recreation and health. However, Toronto's rich biodiversity is preserved in its ESAs, not in mowed lawns and golf courses. Outside of Toronto Island, it is unclear if there is a management plan to monitor the health and to plan the expansion of ESAs. This is especially critical to Toronto's commitment to the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, COP 15, held in Montreal in 2022. One of the most important goals that came out of that conference was the commitment to protect our biodiversity by preserving 30% of the land by 2030. Any plans to reach this noble goal will require healthy ESAs as a source of biodiversity. Much of Toronto's greenspace and biodiversity is being challenged by invasive plants, such as phragmites, Dog-strangling Vine and Garlic Mustard to name a few. Without proper assessment and management of all of Toronto's ESAs, it is unclear if Toronto's current biodiversity can be preserved by 2030. Without proper assessment and management, we won't even know what we have lost.

TOC acknowledges and appreciates the resources that have been designated to the protection of Toronto Island's ESAs, but we do not have the knowledge and experience to determine if these resources are adequate to protect and expand the biodiversity in this park. What we hope is that the lessons learned in developing the Toronto Island Masterplan to preserve its biodiversity can be applied to all of the ESAs throughout the city so that future generations can enjoy the biodiversity that remains today.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
John Nishikawa, Director of Conservation
Toronto Ornithological Club.