

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

2018 Conservation Award:

Anouk Hoedeman

The Conservation Award – Member is given in recognition of an outstanding contribution by a member in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District.

For 2018 we are recognizing the initiative and commitment of Anouk Hoedeman for establishing and expanding Safe Wings Ottawa, a program focused on bird collision research, education, prevention, rescue and short-term care.

Anouk is well known for her work with the OFNC Birds Committee, including the Falcon Watch. She launched an Ottawa chapter of the Toronto-based FLAP (Fatal Light Attraction Program) in 2014, which later evolved into Safe Wings Ottawa, a separate organization that operates as a committee of the OFNC.



Safe Wings estimates that 250,000 birds collide with glass every year in Ottawa. Anouk and her group document about 2,000 to 3,000 of these — the rest go unnoticed or unreported. Many dead birds are eaten by scavengers or discarded, while many injured ones are taken predators or fly away to die elsewhere.

Safe Wings has a core team of about 15 dedicated volunteers who monitor buildings to collect data and dead bodies, rescue birds, and do what is necessary to support one another and the work they do. Anouk and her fellow volunteers have worked hard to build key relationships with groundskeepers, security guards and maintenance staff at various buildings downtown and in other areas of the city. As they search every nook and cranny that could shelter a bird, they also educate passersby and encourage them to rescue injured birds and report window collisions. Dozens of other Safe Wings volunteers offer their support by transporting birds or helping with other tasks.

Safe Wings volunteers also conduct outreach activities, make presentations to various groups on preventing bird collisions, and provide advice on designing bird-friendly buildings and retrofitting existing buildings. Anouk's personal efforts have resulted in the National Capital Commission, Public Services and Procurement Canada, the University of Ottawa and Carleton

University adopting bird-friendly design approaches. In addition, she initiated the City of Ottawa's development of bird-friendly design guidelines, which are expected to come into effect this year.



As a result of its reputation, Safe Wings now receives thousands of calls every year for rescue support from individuals and organizations throughout Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, including the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre, and even the Cornwall SPCA, to name a few.

Because there is such a demand for help, especially outside the Wild Bird Care Centre's operating hours, Anouk obtained federal and provincial rehabilitation permits so she could provide medication, fluids and other life-saving treatment to injured and sick birds. In 2018, Anouk cared for 742 patients on the third floor of her home, which has been transformed into a short-term rehabilitation centre set up with a variety of cages to accommodate and keep birds safe, warm and fed until they can be released or transferred to the Wild Bird Centre. All of this care also requires keeping the space clean, organized, stocked with supplies and ready for injured birds, which may arrive at any time. It all makes for unpredictable demands on her time, and a steep learning curve to determine how to handle different species ranging from hummingbirds to raptors.

We are pleased to recognize the commitment and work of Anouk Hoedeman with this Conservation Award.

