Birds Canada Community Grant

2026 Applicant Guide

Grant program overview

Note: Birds Canada continues to refine the Community Grant to better serve applicants and, most importantly, birds. We may continue to make changes to the program in the future.

Birds Canada provides one-year grants for projects that uncover knowledge, engage people, and take actions that help birds thrive. The Birds Canada Community Grant is funded with revenue generated by participants of the Birds Canada Birdathon.

The Birds Canada Community Grant is built on the legacy of the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation (i.e., the Baillie Fund). The Baillie Fund was established in 1976 by Birds Canada (Long Point Bird Observatory at the time) to honour the significant contributions of James Baillie to the field of ornithology.

Key dates

- Call for applications opens 1 September 2026
- Applications are **due 29 September 2026 at 5:00 PM Pacific Time**
- Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by end of December 2026 (*tentative, subject to change)

How much funding is available?

The Birds Canada Community Grant is designed to support a range of small-scale projects across Canada, with a total funding pool of up to $22,500 for all projects. While we can consider requests up to $8,000, the majority of grants awarded will be between $2,000 and 5,000.

Each year, the Ontario Bird Banding Association contributes up to $500 from the Bill and Betty Wasserfall Memorial Award to a Community Grant recipient undertaking a project that includes banding or other means of marking and tracking birds that spend part of the year in Canada.

We are working to grow this total funding pool and strive to have additional funds available in future years.

Who can apply?

Applicants must be based in Canada. We will prioritize funding smaller organizations that may have limited access to other funding opportunities. *Please note: Only one application per organization will be accepted.*

Eligible applicants include:

- Registered charities, non-profit organizations, and community groups
- Indigenous Nations, Indigenous governments, Indigenous communities, Indigenous organizations
- Educational institutions

Ineligible applicants include:

- For-profit organizations
- Municipal, provincial, or federal government
- Persons applying as individuals
- Post-secondary students undertaking research projects. Instead, please apply directly to the student research awards co-offered by Birds Canada and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists - Société des ornithologistes du Canada at https://www.sco-soc.ca/awards

What types of projects are eligible?

Projects must have a clear focus on birds and align with at least one of the Birds Canada Community Grant objectives to:

Uncover knowledge: Collect, share and analyze data that informs conservation efforts for birds.
Engage People: Bring together people who are passionate about birds to champion their cause.
Take action: To apply knowledge to tangible conservation efforts across Canada.

Examples of the types of outcomes we like to support are listed below. Please note these are examples only and project eligibility is not limited to this list:

- Improve understanding of key knowledge gaps for birds by undertaking a targeted research or field project.
- Improve understanding of local bird species at risk occurrence by undertaking a volunteer-led survey.
- Increase participation of youth and amateur naturalists in bird monitoring and conservation by providing skill-building opportunities.
- Increase understanding or conservation of birds through undertaking a study guided by Etuaptmumk (Two-eyed Seeing, the practice of viewing the world through both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems).
- Reduce barriers to birds and birding among underserved communities through inclusive events or workshops.
- Improve habitat quality for birds by undertaking a targeted habitat enhancement project.

Examples of projects **likely to score poorly** on the :

- Projects from well-resourced or larger organizations.

- General bird watching or outreach events with limited reach or unclear impact.
- General habitat improvement projects without direct impact for birds.
- Projects with limited or unclear impact beyond the project period (e.g., nest box building projects without long-term plans for maintenance).

What projects/activities are *ineligible* for funding?

- Projects that are not specifically focused on birds (e.g., general nature education)
- Projects that do not contribute to at least one of the Program's objectives
- Lobbying, political advocacy, or partisan activities that promote a particular social, political, or economic point of view
- Research projects that entail the sacrificing or harm of study subjects
- Activities required as part of a provincial or federal permit
- Bird rehabilitation or veterinary training or services
- Land acquisition
- Funding for ongoing operations at Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) member stations, as funding is available through participation in Birds Canada Birdathon, which has a special funding program for CMMN members.
- Student research projects (instead please apply to the student research awards co-offered by Birds Canada and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists - Société des ornithologistes du Canada https://www.sco-soc.ca/awards)
- Projects that replicate existing Birds Canada Citizen Science or monitoring programs without substantial differentiation (see our list of active programs here)
- Projects that intentionally or unintentionally reinforce barriers to underserved communities

Where can projects take place?

Project activities must take place in Canada or in non-breeding areas that are used by migratory bird species that spend part of the year in Canada.

When can projects take place?

Project activities must take place between 1 January 2027 and 31 December 2027.

What expenses are eligible for funding?

Eligible expenses:

- Human resources (e.g., salary and benefits for project staff, contractor fees)
- Travel (up to $0.62/km for mileage reimbursement)
- Materials and supplies
- Equipment
- Overhead or administrative costs (up to 15% of your project costs)
- Honorarium for Elders, Knowledge Holders, or their support people
- Items for ceremony or on the land activities

- Capital or building

Ineligible expenses:

- Contingency costs

Budget items should clearly align with the Project Plan in the application form.

There is no matching funds requirement.

How to apply?

Submit your online application by **29 September 2026 at 5:00 pm Pacific Time** (apply here). If collaborating with an Indigenous partner, please include a letter of support from that partner. Applications can be submitted in English or French. We suggest you use this MS Word doc provided on the program website to draft your answers offline before transferring them to the online application form. Or, save your progress on the online form. **We encourage short, focused answers and bullet points arePlease refer to the an examplesample application for an example.**

Birds Canada understands that Indigenous Nations have stewarded the lands in their territories since time immemorial. We respect Indigenous voices, knowledge and knowledge systems, and the ongoing work on the land critical for wild birds to thrive. As we strive to decolonize our work and application process, we invite Indigenous applicants to reach out to Birds Canada for support in discussing their ideas and applications.

How are applications reviewed?

We will screen applications for eligibility based on the criteria in this guide. An external Grant Review Committee, comprising volunteers with diverse experience from across the country, will then review eligible applications using this evaluation rubric. We aim to notify applicants of the funding decisions by the end of December (tentative, subject to change).

Successful applicants

Upon notification, successful applicants sign a grant agreement with Birds Canada and then receive their payment. We request a brief one-page report outlining the project achievements by 31 December 2027.

Questions?

Contact Karla Falk at kfalk@birdscanada.org.