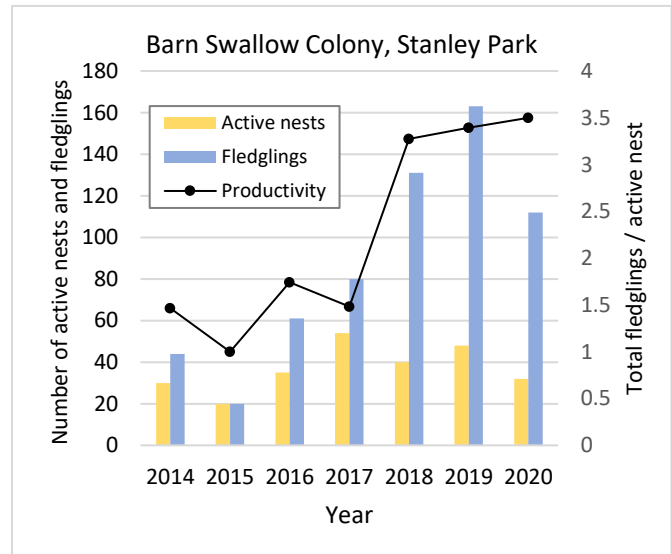


Wildlife that Breed in Stanley Park: Highlights of the 2020 Season

Monitoring wildlife is important. If we know which species are using the Park to breed today, we can track changes to their populations over time. Some of the species we monitor are indicator species: a change in their abundance or presence in the Park helps us know what kinds of environmental changes we may be seeing here.

112 Barn Swallows hatched in 2020

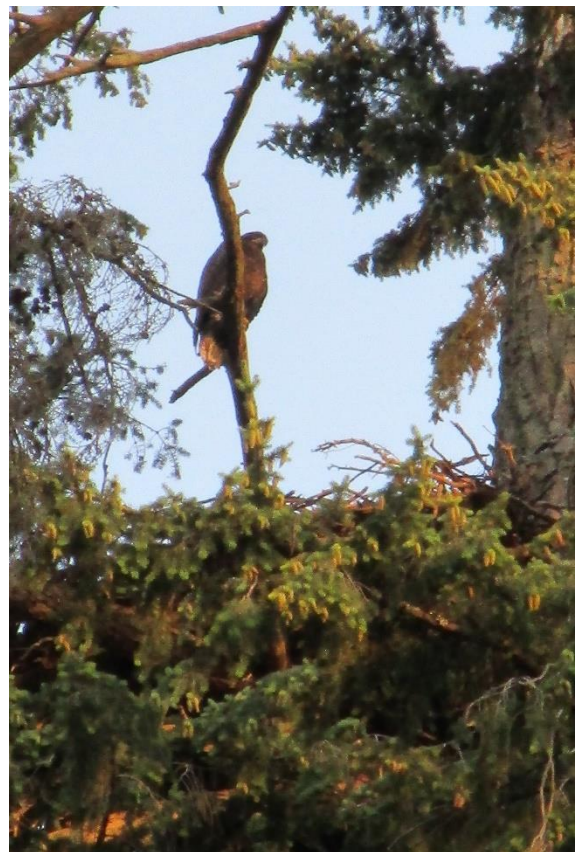
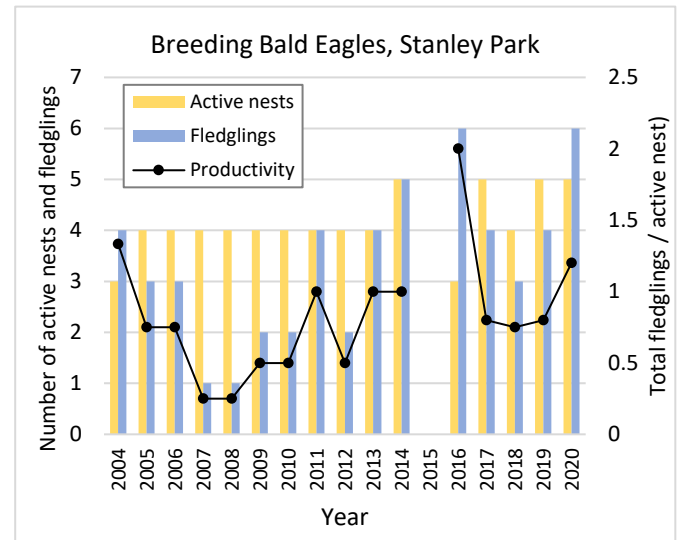
Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) are beautiful to watch as they swoop and dive, hunting for insects. Successful breeding areas are becoming more important in light of the swallows' globally declining populations. They are on the provincial Blue List (for species of Special Concern) and federally they are considered Threatened. Here at Stanley Park we have an average of 37 active nests per year; in 2020 there were 32 active nests, with a total of 112 young produced. It appears that the number of young produced per nest (also known as the productivity) has been increasing ever since monitoring of their nests began in 2014. This species of swallow makes cup nests out of mud, grass, feathers, and in Stanley Park, horse hair! This colony of Barn Swallows nests in the Mounted Police Horse Barns, so horse hair is readily available.



An adult Barn Swallow landing on its nest
(Photo by Jeannine Johnstone).

High number of Bald Eagle nests in 2020

The forests of Stanley Park sometimes reverberate with the high-pitched vocalizations of Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), creating an exciting atmosphere as we wonder what they are communicating. Bald Eagles are significant to many people and are culturally significant to Coast Salish First Nations, where members may belong to the Eagle Clan, and the eagle features in stories. They also play an important role in the Park ecosystem; their presence controls seabird populations, which in turn affects fish and invertebrate populations. There are multiple active Bald Eagle nests in Stanley Park. In 2020 there were 5 active nests, tied with 2016 for a record high number. The eagle pairs successfully produced 6 young eagles this year! Many people are surprised to learn that eagles lay their eggs early, beginning incubation in mid to late February in some cases. The earliest case in recent years was Feb 20, 2019 when we saw an eagle incubating in the nest near Malkin Bowl. We heard our first peeps coming from a nest on April 20th in 2020, indicating that young were present in the nest, an exciting day for our survey volunteers!

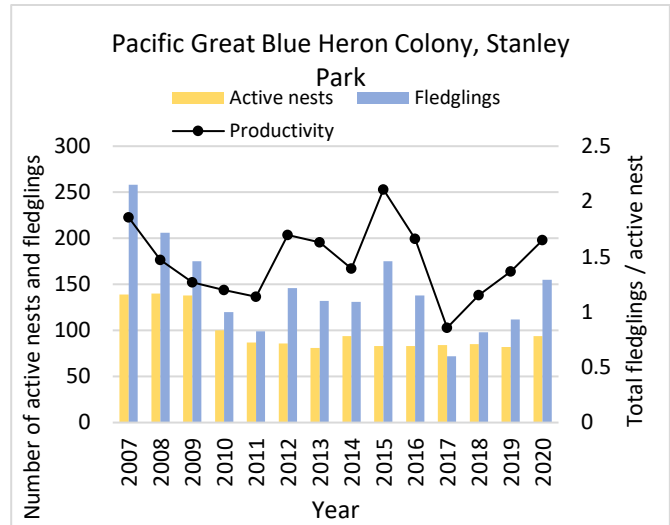


A 12.5 week old Bald Eagle perches over its nest. An eaglet was seen perching on this tree six days later, and after that it was not seen anymore, indicating that it fledged (left the nest) (Photo by Nicole Delapierre).

94 Pacific Great Blue Heron nests in 2020

Pacific Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias fannini*) usually nest far away from human activity, but Stanley Park has hosted a heron colony near the Park Board Office since 2001, where there is plenty of foot traffic. People love to watch these nests during the spring and summer, both in person and via the City of Vancouver's [Heron Cam](#), which captures many exciting moments of courtship, mating, nest building, incubation, care for the young and fledging. In 2020 there were 94 active nests and an estimated 155 young, making this year more productive than the last three years both in

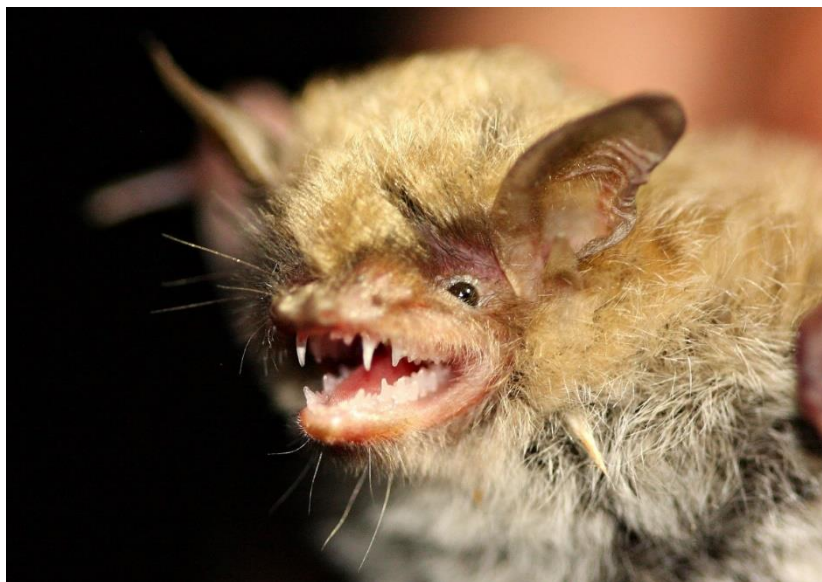
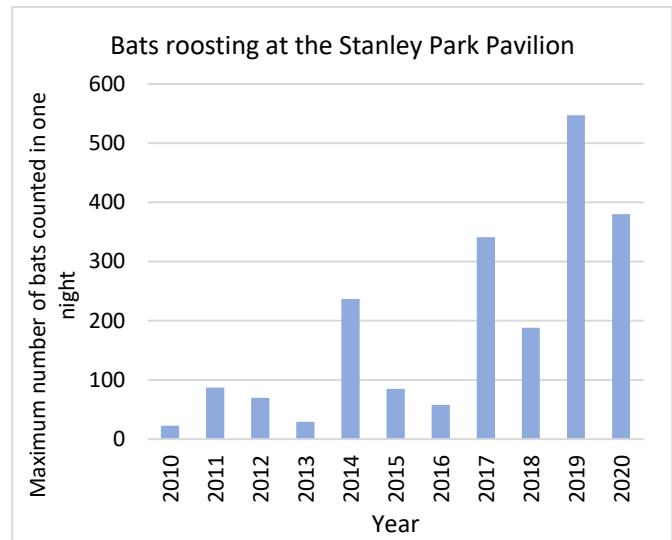
terms of total number of young and in number of young per nest. The first heron sighted in the trees was on February 10, 2020, in a nest that is frequently the first nest visited each season.



Three-month-old Great Blue Herons perched on a nest (Photo by Frank Lin).

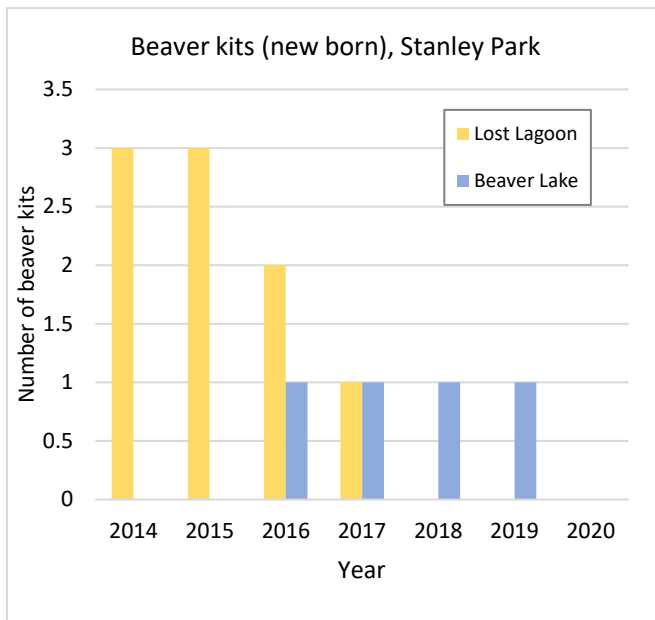
380 bats counted in 2020, but where do they go after June?

Bat emergence counts in Stanley Park are part of the [BC Community Bat program](#) counts. In Stanley Park, two bat roosts are well established: one at the Vancouver Rowing Club and one at the Stanley Park Pavilion. Only female bats and their pups are part of these large “maternity” roosts. A few odd males also use these buildings as a shelter, but they do not roost together. The bats roost in the attic, between the roof’s tiles, and in the bat boxes installed for them to use. In 2020, the highest number of bats emerging from the Stanley Park Pavilion on a given night was on June 2, 2020, with 380 bats counted, belonging to 5 species: Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*), and silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*). The bats of the maternity roost leave in June and we are not sure where they go. Bats are still present in the Vancouver Rowing Club later in summer, adding to the intrigue. In December 2019, we installed 12 new bat boxes on South Creek Trail and near Beaver Lake to provide extra roost availability. Beaver Lake and Lost Lagoon are hot spots for watching bats foraging on nocturnal insects like midges.



This photo of a Yuma myotis bat shows its sharp teeth, perfect for snatching insects on the wing. (Photo by J. N. Stuart, Flickr Creative Commons)

Two families of aging beavers in Stanley Park



Stanley Park has two families of beavers, one in Beaver Lake and one in Lost Lagoon. Every year with the help of volunteers, SPES conducts beaver monitoring surveys at dawn and dusk, when beavers are most active. We see them feeding, swimming, scratching, cleaning themselves, resting and occasionally slapping their tails. In 2020 no kits (young beavers) were born in either Beaver Lake or Lost Lagoon. There already were no kits in Lost Lagoon since 2017, which we suspect is because the beavers are getting old. We will be investigating Beaver Lake again this year to see if there are any kits. Usually, beavers leave their parents' side after one or two years, but at both locations in Stanley Park they seem to be sticking around for longer. This might have to do with the fact that they have all they need right where they grew up, and their ageing parents aren't having more kits anyway.



This photo of a beaver at Ceperley Meadow was taken late in the summer of 2019 (Photo by Frank Lin).

Many breeding birds in the Park

Many birds make their nests, lay eggs, and raise a family year after year in Stanley Park. We survey breeding birds through point counts, where the observers stay still and silent for five minutes, recording any birds they see or hear during that time. The table to the right shows a list of all the bird species we detected during late spring and early summer, the time of year when birds breed.

BIRD SPECIES BREEDING IN STANLEY PARK 2018-2020	
American Goldfinch	Orange-crowned Warbler
American Robin	Pacific Wren
Anna's Hummingbird	Pine Siskin
Bald Eagle	Pileated Woodpecker
Black-capped Chickadee	Pacific Slope Flycatcher
Black-headed Grosbeak	Purple Finch
Brown Creeper	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Black Throated Gray Warbler	Red-breasted Sapsucker
Canada Goose	Rufous Hummingbird
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Red-winged Blackbird
Cerulean Warbler	Song Sparrow
Common Raven	Spotted Towhee
Common Yellowthroat	Swainson's Thrush
Great Blue Heron	Townsend's Warbler
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Varied Thrush
Hairy Woodpecker	Warbling Vireo
MacGillivray's Warbler	Western Tanager
Northwestern Crow	Wilson's Warbler
Northern Flicker	Yellow-rumped Warbler



A Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), one of the birds known to breed in Stanley Park (Photo by Liron Gertsman).

Six amphibian species found in the Park

At SPES we have a few different ways to detect the presence of amphibians. We listen, and we look in their terrestrial habitat as well as their breeding habitat (ponds). During auditory surveys, we hear the native Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*), the invasive green frog (*Lithobates clamitans*) and the invasive American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*). We saw some of their more silent cousins, the Western red-backed salamander (*Plethodon vehiculum*), Ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii*) and Northwestern salamander (*Ambystoma gracile*) hiding under pieces of plywood we placed in the forest. We also found evidence of breeding from Northwestern salamander, American bullfrog, and green frog.



Megan and Justine from SPES conducting a pond breeding survey (Photo by Ariane Comeau).



An Ensatina from our 2020 terrestrial survey (Photo by Megan Cooling).

The wildlife surveys we conduct contribute to a deeper understanding of the wildlife activities, like breeding, within Stanley Park. From the survey data, we are able to assess the ecological integrity of a variety of ecosystems within the Park; we completed a large-scale assessment of Stanley Park recently, publishing the [State of the Park Report for the Ecological Integrity of Stanley Park 2020 \(SOPEI\)](#) in October of 2020. While COVID-19 slowed down some SPES work, monitoring continued with over ten different types of wildlife surveys active throughout the year.

Thank you to all survey volunteers and donors for their passion and generosity.

If you would like more information on how to get involved, learn about the volunteer opportunities or make a donation, please reach out to vols@stanleyparkecology.ca or visit www.stanleyparkecology.ca

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A group of bird enthusiasts on a SPES survey (Photo by Peter Woods).