

# Breeding Wildlife in Stanley Park

## 2024 Highlights



This report provides a summary of observation efforts for select surveys and wildlife monitoring conducted by the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) over the 2024 calendar year. Such efforts would not be possible without the generous assistance from almost 50 passionate conservation volunteers who assisted SPES throughout the year. Observations from surveys are used and analyzed as bio-indicators for the decennial State of the Park's Ecological Integrity (SOPEI) reports.

When working in what is now known as Stanley Park, it is essential to keep in mind the history of this land to put our work and presence into context. 'Stanley Park' is a land which has been inhabited for generations by Indigenous families, where people were able to steward and sustainably live with the various plants and wildlife here for over 3,000 years. The colonial establishment of this land as a park displaced the people who called this place home, including immigrant Hawaiian and Chinese workers and their families. The impact of colonization is something that we should all consider and keep in mind when visiting and working on this land. This Park is situated within the traditional and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



Photos by Marisa Bischoff

## Barn Swallow Colony in Stanley Park Shows Continued Resiliency

A Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) colony returns to Stanley Park every spring to the Vancouver Police Department horse barn and Vancouver Parks Board (VPB) service yard. They migrate northward in the spring from their over-wintering habitat in Central and South America. Barn Swallows build mud cup style nests, and a colony will mostly use the same nests from year to year with some repairs. A few new nests are built every year, while some nests fall apart or are no longer suitable.

This year, **106 chicks were observed over 27 active nests**. This is a decrease from 2023 where 130 chicks hatched over 42 active nests. The Stanley Park population remains relatively stable, with some

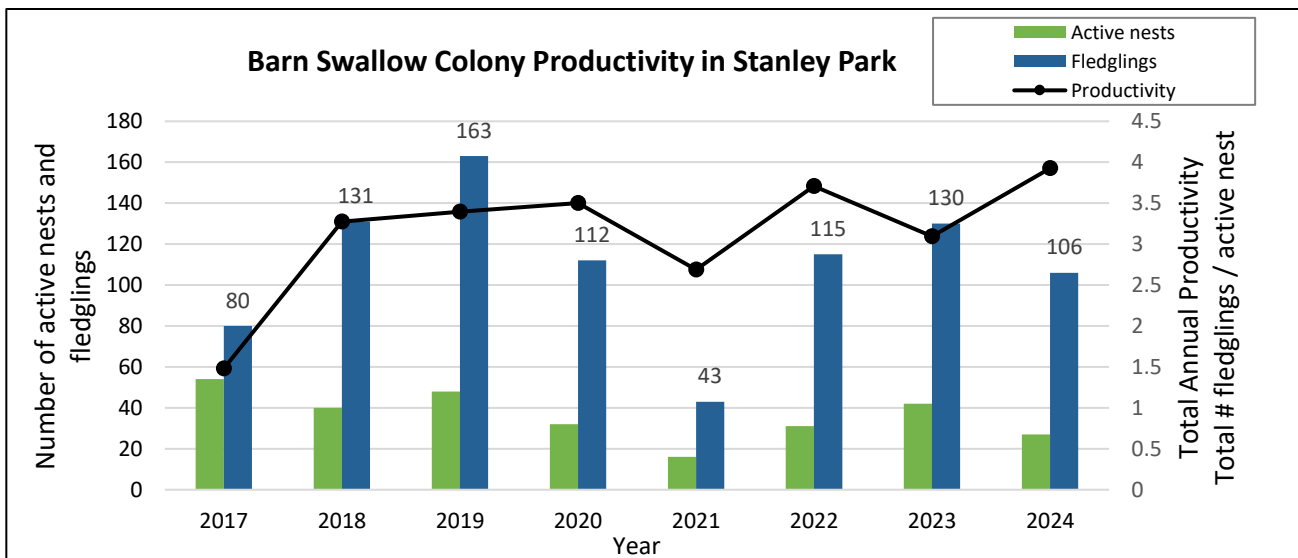


Photos by Marisa Bischoff

outlier years such as in 2021 when the extreme heat that year likely contributed to low numbers of active nests and successful fledglings.



Barn Swallows are part of a group of birds called “aerial insectivores”, referring to their method of catching and eating insect prey almost exclusively while in flight. Aerial insectivore populations in Canada have seen a roughly [43% decline since 1970](#) according to the 2024 State of the Birds Report, and as a result are classified as Special Concern federally. In BC the conservation status of Barn Swallows is currently considered to be secure and not at risk of extinction.



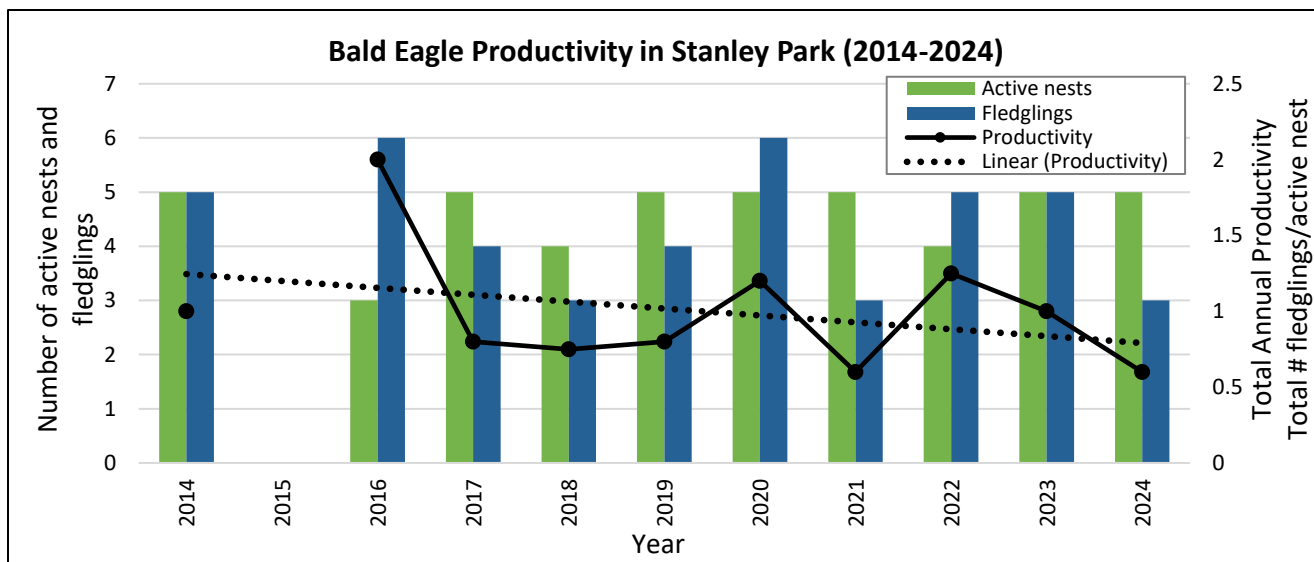


## Two Nests Produced 3 Bald Eagle Fledglings in 2024



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) pairs separate at the end of summer, then re-unite in the fall, forming the same breeding pair year after year. Mating rituals can start as early as October upon return from their regional migration. In general, a Bald Eagle's diet consists mostly of fish, but also carrion, mammals, gulls, waterfowl, and garbage. However, in Stanley Park, and the rest of Greater Vancouver, Bald Eagle diets consist mainly of other birds, such as waterfowl, and gulls (making up around 85% of their diet).

This year, out of the five nests that were being monitored in Stanley Park, five nests were active (meaning an adult was observed in the nest at least once during the breeding season), of which two produced successful offspring. **In total, three (3) eaglets were observed to have fledged over two nests in 2024.**



\*No data collected in 2015. More detailed information can be found online in the annual Eagle reports on the SPES website.



Photos by Marisa Bischoff

## Updated Heron Survey Protocol Continues into 2024

The Pacific subspecies of Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias fannini*) is designated as a blue-listed (vulnerable species) species per British Columbia's Provincial Conservation Status. Almost 80% of BC's population of this subspecies is found in and around the Fraser River Delta.



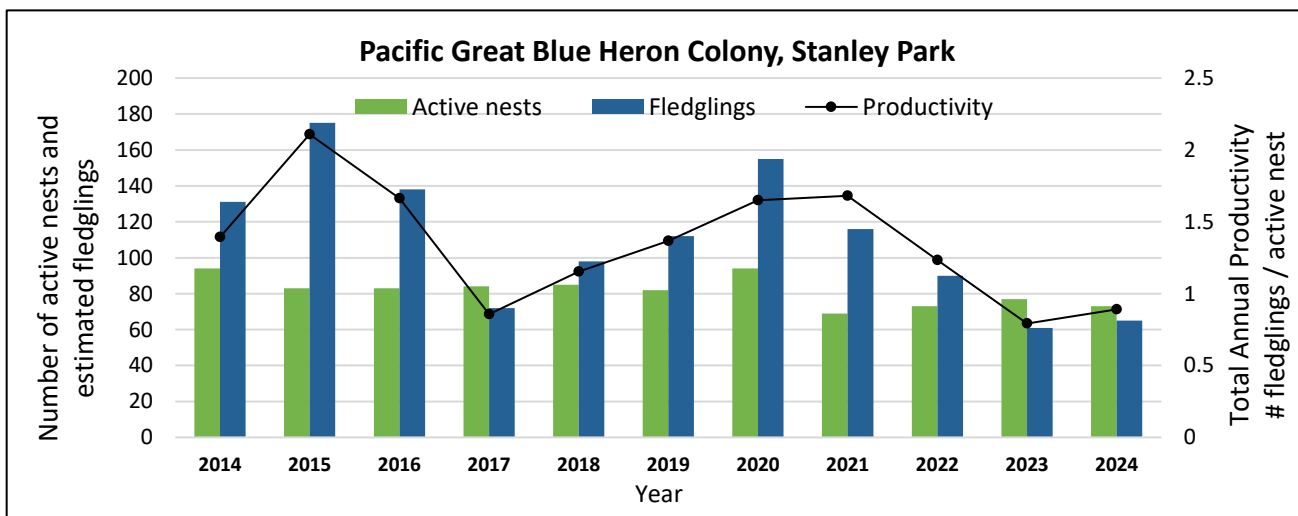
Photo by Marisa Bischoff

The Heron colony is a popular attraction in Stanley Park, both in person and via the City of Vancouver's [Heron Cam](#), which captures many exciting moments of courtship, mating, nest building, incubation, feeding, and fledging behaviours.

In 2024 SPES observed **73 active nests and an estimated 68 fledglings**. Prior to 2023, SPES only surveyed a subset of the heron colony population, using this sample to extrapolate the total

numbers for the entire colony. As of the 2023 season, the survey methods were slightly altered to include and record observations for every nest in the colony, with the hope that more accurate numbers can be produced. This resulted in some changes to overall metrics.

Previously, Heron nests were concentrated within the trees adjacent to Park Lane. Over time, due to the loss of some trees in that area, the Herons seem to have started to build more nests in the trees between the tennis courts. Many of these nests were outside of the original population sample surveyed by SPES. To address the shifting nature of the colony, our methodology was updated, bringing it more in line with other heron survey protocols around the Lower Mainland, which will allow us to better monitor the overall status of the colony.



\*For more information regarding the herons, we invite you to read the 2024 Heron Report on the SPES Website.

## Bat Emergence Counts of Summer Maternity Roosts Continue

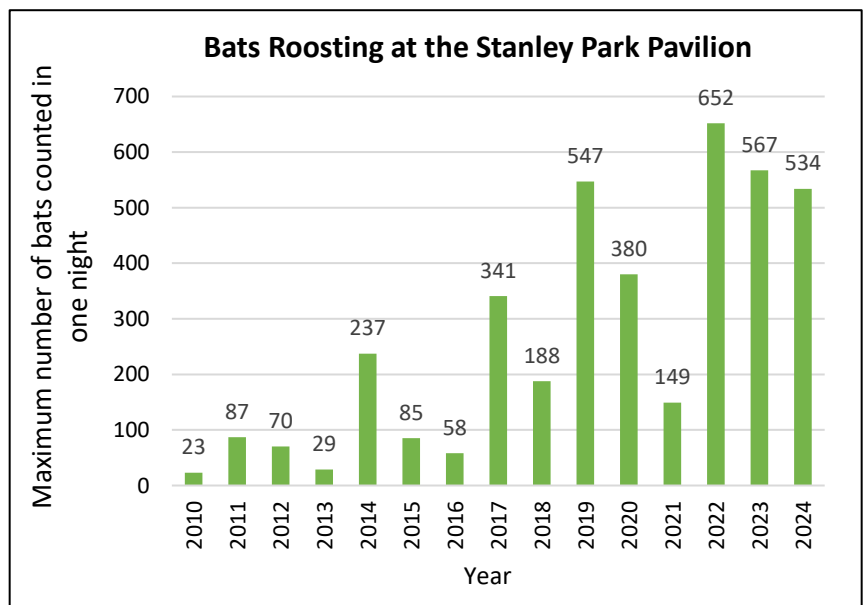
There are at least five confirmed species of bats that use habitat within Stanley Park during the late spring and summer months, including Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), Little Brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Big Brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*), and Silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*). Female bats arrive at their summer roost site pregnant and give birth to their young in the late spring. Bats sleep during the day and leave their young at night while they emerge to forage. After emerging from their roosts, bats fly toward waterbodies and wetlands such as Beaver Lake and Lost Lagoon that attract small flying insects. SPES actively monitors two roosts in Stanley Park.

The Stanley Park Pavilion hosts a maternity roost in its attic, where bats emerging from the building are counted every one or two weeks throughout spring and summer. This year, volunteers counted a single night high of **approximately 534 bats on June 6, 2024**. This is a slight decrease from last year's highest count of 567 bats which occurred on May 30, 2023.

Emergence counts do not provide very accurate representations of the true state of the colony but consistent survey methods over years can show trends. Bats are very sensitive to various environmental factors, so large fluctuations in the short-term are not necessarily a cause for concern.



Photos by Marisa Bischoff





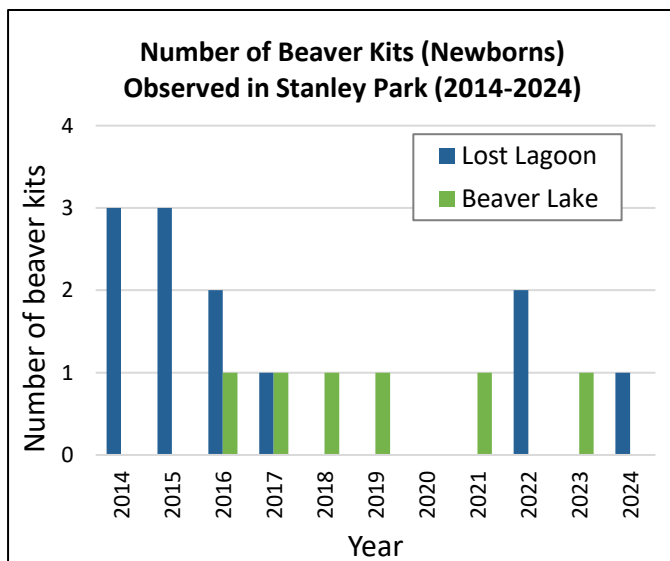
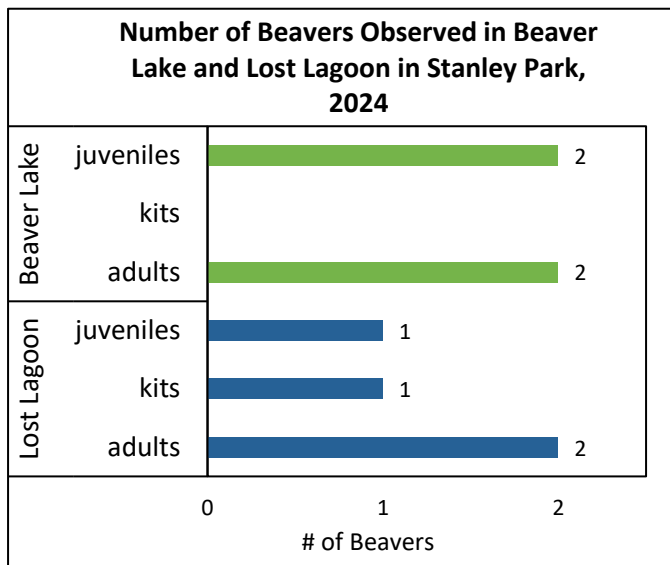
## Monitoring Beaver families in Lost Lagoon and Beaver Lake

Beavers mate for life and will continue to use the same territory year after year, maintaining a lodge, damming water, and having offspring. A beaver family can consist of two adults/parents, kits (newborns), yearlings (1 year-olds), and juveniles (2-3 year-olds). The older offspring help raise the family until they reach around 2-3 years of age when they leave to find their own territories.

This year, SPES volunteers observed **four (4) beavers at Lost Lagoon, and four (4) beavers at Beaver Lake**. These age classes are consistent with expectations, based on observations of the families in previous years.



Photos by Marisa Bischoff



## Birds breeding in Stanley Park

Several species of birds breed in Stanley Park, and SPES tracks breeding bird presence within the park via point count surveys every year. Observers stay still and silent for a consistent amount of time at each survey 'station' and record any birds seen or heard. Each survey is split over two days, with one survey completed at the end of May and another at the end of June.

A total of **44 species** were detected during the 2024 surveys, shown in **Table 1**. Species that were detected in both May and June surveys are highlighted in green, indicating a high likelihood that these species are breeding in Stanley Park. This does not exclude the possibility of other species breeding in Stanley Park. For example, it is known that Bald Eagles and Great-blue Herons breed in the Park, but they were either not detected, or detected in only one of the two surveys, and therefore are not highlighted here.



Photo by Josephine Hrynkiw

**Table 1. Bird Species Detected in 2024 Point Count Surveys, Stanley Park**

Detected in both surveys	Detected in one survey
American Crow	American Goldfinch
American Robin	Bald Eagle
Anna's Hummingbird	Bewick's Wren
Black-capped Chickadee	Black-headed Cowbird
Brown Creeper	Black-headed Grosbeak
Black-throated Gray Warbler	Common Merganser
Canada Goose	Common Yellowthroat
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Glaucous-winged Gull
Cedar Waxwing	House Finch
Common Raven	Northern Flicker
Dark-eyed Junco	Red-eyed Vireo
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Steller's Jay
Orange-crowned Warbler	Western Wood Peewee
Pacific Wren	Willow Flycatcher
Pine Siskin	Yellow Warbler
Pileated Woodpecker	
Purple Finch	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	
Red-breasted Sapsucker	
Red-winged Blackbird	
Song Sparrow	
Spotted Towhee	
Swainson's Thrush	
Townsend's Warbler	
Warbling Vireo	
Western Flycatcher	
Western Tanager	
Wilson's Warbler	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	
<b>Total: 29</b>	<b>Total: 15</b>



These highlights represent a snapshot into a select few species of wildlife that SPES monitored during the breeding season in Stanley Park in 2024. It is important to keep in mind that conclusions regarding the status of wildlife populations within the Park cannot be drawn from a single breeding season. However, consistency in methods over several years of data collection can offer insight into general trends even if absolute numbers are approximated or estimated. Data collected from these long-term studies can help us develop a deeper understanding of the Park's ability to support a variety of wildlife as our climate continues to change. These long-term data-gathering efforts help SPES and the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation make informed conservation decisions and provides vital information to local researchers.

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



Photos by Marisa Bischoff

If you would like more information on how to get involved, learn about volunteer opportunities or to make a donation, please reach out to [vols@stanleyparkeecology.ca](mailto:vols@stanleyparkeecology.ca) or visit [www.stanleyparkeecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkeecology.ca)

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