



Encouraging the appreciation, study and conservation of all components of the natural world.

Inglewood Bird Sanctuary (IBS) Outdoor Classroom Issues and Arguments

Overview: We at Nature Calgary believe that the development permit for the outdoor classroom within IBS should be revoked. Its location is in contravention of the City's Municipal Development Plan, Urban Parks Master Plan, Biodiversity Strategic Plan, and the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Master Plan. The outdoor classroom removes bird habitat and increases human presence in a small bird sanctuary. We support showing school children a natural area, but this must be done without substantially degrading the natural areas they come to see.

Specific Issues and Arguments

A. Location:

1. Located in a Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary

As per: Policy when Considering Permitting or Authorizing Prohibited Activities in Protected Areas Designated Under the Canada Wildlife Act and Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994.

<https://www.ec.gc.ca/Publications/CEA0F36C-9E24-4AF6-881B-39A66EA68ED3%5CProhibitedActivitiesPolicye.pdf>

- “Environment Canada recognizes the role of protected areas in preventing the loss or fragmentation of habitat. The importance of protecting unfragmented habitats will be considered when assessing the proposed activity”.
- “The cumulative environmental effects of past, current and future activities within and, where appropriate, adjacent to the protected area must be considered within an appropriate spatial and temporal context”.

The cumulative impact of the classroom project in conjunction with the “Bend in the Bow” project must be considered in the permitting application.

- “All alternatives to the activity that would reduce the impact on the wildlife area, the wildlife species and their habitats have been considered and the best solution has been adopted”.

“The Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary designation confers special significance which helps to protect it from potentially destructive whims of the local community. It hands the sanctuary a wider purpose and establish it as a keystone migratory bird habitat within the patchwork of international conservation areas” (Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Master Plan, page 51).

Note: The donation by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation is to be celebrated. It is the use of the money by Calgary Parks that is in question.

2. Located in a Special Protected Natural Area (Natural Areas Management Plan). Inglewood Bird Sanctuary (IBS) is the most biodiverse park in Calgary’s Natural Environment Parks system. It is especially important as a stopover for migratory flocks of passerines. The visitation period of the 2000+ additional school children that the proposed outdoor classroom is hoped to accommodate will occur principally during the peak migration period of spring and fall.

3. Located in a previous off limits location, that provided nesting, feeding and cover opportunities as well as providing habitat security and connectivity between the Walker house and the reserve at the south end of IBS.

4. Located in an area that was previously used by a pheasant rearing facility that was removed from IBS to enhance the usability of the area by native wildlife.

5. Located in an area markedly different than what was originally announced.

6. IBS already has 3 classrooms, including the Walker House located only 112 meters from the proposed site. There are also plans to add two more classrooms to the visitor centre, bringing the total to 5 classrooms. Is there a need for the outdoor classroom or is it just a desire to do something with the monies donated by the TD Friends of Environment Fund?

B. City of Calgary Legislation:

1. Municipal Development Plan

- Section 2.3.4: "The city will conserve biodiversity and important environmental systems". Expanding the human footprint into previous off limits areas at IBS is contrary to this objective.
- Section 2.6.2: "Reduce the disruption and fragmentation of natural habitats" The removal of trees, shrubs and grasslands required for this project is contrary to this objective.
- Section 2.6.4: "The real power of natural areas lies in viewing and applying them as a system rather than individual components" The Bend in the Bow project lists IBS as one of three components. The others being the Inglewood Wildlands and Pearce Estates. The classroom could be positioned in one of them. Also, there are at least 7 other major parks and a host of smaller parks in the natural environment parks system that could accommodate an outdoor classroom.
- Section 2.6.4: "Give the highest priority to the protection of environmentally significant areas in the allocation of land use" The IBS is considered one of the most environmentally significant areas in the park system.
- Section 2.6.4: "Ensure that the protection of significant habitats take precedent over other uses"

2. Urban Parks Master Plan

- IBS is one of the most important wildlife refuge in the City of Calgary.
- The Public Advisory Committee for Bow River Centre endorses the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Master Plan

3. Biodiversity Strategic Plan

- Target 1: Reduce Habitat Fragmentation: "Identify, protect and manage ecological cores and corridors". IBS is certainly an ecological core within the park system. The location of the classroom will hinder the functionality of it acting as a corridor.
- Target 2: Reduce Habitat Loss: "Restore 20% of Calgary's current open space to support the conservation of biodiversity".
In keeping with this goal and the ecological core values of IBS, it would be better to restore the area that is being considered for the classroom.

4. Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Master Plan

- Page 3: Selby Walker, who was the driving force in getting the Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary designation, was acutely aware of the need to manage and conserve wildlife populations of migratory birds.
- Page 19: Commitment of Calgary Parks and Recreation
 - Preservation of all valuable natural areas remaining in Calgary if those lands are unique or have high value to Calgarians.
 - Management of natural areas to preserve existing species, habitats and special natural areas.
- Page 25: Harold Pinel, manager of IBS, and Dave Elphinstone, author of "Inglewood Bird Sanctuary – a place for all seasons" consider that IBS nesting species was in decline due to increases of number of visitors. The authors of the plan considered that IBS was close to its carrying capacity at about 50,000 visitors per year (1998). Now visitation is at least 179,112 (2012 visitation number provided by IBS)
- Page 29: In 1990 group bookings for guided tours was 220 or roughly 4000 persons (assuming an average of 20 persons per group). In 2012 over 30,000 persons attended programs, many of which entered the IBS grounds.
- Page 33: "The species diversity is unmatched by any other natural area in the city. The number and diversity of migrating warblers is unique".
- Page 33: "Habitat for migrating birds is no less important than nesting habitat". Reducing the trees and shrubs in the location of the proposed classroom certainly reduces the habitat. Also increasing the human presence in the area of the classroom greatly reduces the security of the habitat.
- Page 35: "Grasslands are a critical component for many species of wildlife" The reduction of the grasslands due to the gravel access road to the classroom will certainly degrade the use of the grasslands in that area. **Note:** Calgary Parks considers those lands as a disturbed area. The birds do not make this distinction.
- Page 59: Mandate for the Management of IBS.
 - "That the global issue of preservation and protection of naturally associated wildlife and their habitat be adopted as the mandate of IBS. This mandate should prevail in the event of conflicting management or development proposals".

C. Process:

1. Calgary Parks Business Plan 2015 – 2018

- Page 328 – “Parks staff will engage citizens by offering consistent and meaningful public consultation opportunities for park design and re-development”. The Calgary Field Naturalists’ Society (Nature Calgary), despite playing a critical role in getting the city to purchase IBS, being an important participant in the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Master Plan as well as being a major repository for bird sighting data regarding IBS, was **not consulted** about the outdoor classroom plan for the original location nor the current location.

2. Bend in the Bow Project

- The drastic change in location and design of the outdoor classroom as compared what was originally announced in April of 2014 renders the consultation and approval of the original concept null and void.
- The current redesign of the development was proceeded with at the same time as Calgary parks unveiled and started a much more inclusive consultation process for the Bend in the Bow project. The outdoor classroom is a key element identified in the Bend in the Bow project as Element L7. Thus it is wrong to have started the project prior to the completion of the consultation process.
- To fully gauge the impact of the outdoor classroom it must be considered in tandem with the other proposed “enhancements” of the Bend in the Bow project so that their cumulative impacts on the biodiversity of IBS can be properly understood.

D. Summary

In 1929 Selby Walker thought that Inglewood would make a great bird sanctuary to protect the migrating flocks of birds. The federal government agreed and the Inglewood Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary was born. Since that time most of the original 160 hectares has been lost to various

developments including the Inglewood Golf course and the right of way for a portion of the Deerfoot Trail.

The current 33 hectares was preserved when the city purchased the Colonel Walker property and adjacent lands in 1970. This occurred with much lobbying by members of the Calgary Field Naturalists' Society (Nature Calgary) principally by Ian Halladay, who received the mayor's environment achievement award for his efforts in 1997. Harry Boothman, director of parks at the time, was also instrumental in this task for which he should be well recognised.

The human pressure on IBS has increased many fold since that time. This has been especially true of the last 20 years when a disproportionate emphasis on human use of the sanctuary has occurred. As a result the carrying capacity of IBS has been greatly exceeded. It is hard to imagine that Calgary Parks truly believes and cares about the unique biodiversity importance of IBS when they are striving to increase the use of IBS by 2000+ students by building this outdoor classroom, especially considering all the other enhancements they are considering.

There are plenty of other places that this classroom can be built. It is time to reduce the human pressure on IBS so that it can truly be the Inglewood **Bird Sanctuary**.

Nature Calgary

Calgary Field Naturalists' Society

PO Box 981

Calgary, Alberta. T2P 2K4

www.naturecalgary.com