

# Urban wildlife: Some birds crave cement, not trees

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Not all animals crave green spaces. Some thrive in urban ecosystems composed of concrete and glass and this particularity will be addressed by Danielle Dagenais, a professor at the Université de Montréal School of Landscape Architecture, as part of the Sommet sur la biodiversité et le verdissement de Montreal on April 27 and 28.

One of the most interesting case studies is the Black Redstart. This small bird originating from the arid Alps first settled in downtown London in 1926. The Second World War bombings buried parts of the city in rubble, which was an ideal habitat for the Redstarts. They thrived for many years in the city until greening projects deprived them of their "ecosystem." By the 1990s, the population was on the brink of extinction in the city. Today, the Black Redstart Action Plan is devoted to creating "brown roofs" (as opposed to "green roofs") made of pebbles and rubble to help support the Redstarts.

Dagenais' presentation will review new green spaces and new biodiversity in Montreal. However, she won't speak of the city's lush green parks or luxuriant Mont-Royal but rather its abandoned lots and railway tracks. According to Dagenais, we as a population are ignoring the potential for biodiversity in such areas.

"I'm not questioning the need for protected areas," says Dagenais. "My objective is to highlight that biodiversity is much more extensive than we imagine it to be."

In recent years, several studies have explored the rich flora and fauna found in green roofs, abandoned industrial sites and storm water management systems in cities around the world.

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity and the event was launched at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in January. Dagenais attended the event, which concluded with 36 recommendations including: "The [biodiversity](#) of the urban environment, where more than 50 percent of humans now live, should be inventoried, conserved and enhanced in a way that allows the rich human-nature interaction that is so essential for well-being."

The upcoming Montreal summit will bring together experts from Canada, the United States, the Netherlands, England and Germany.

Provided by University of Montreal

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