

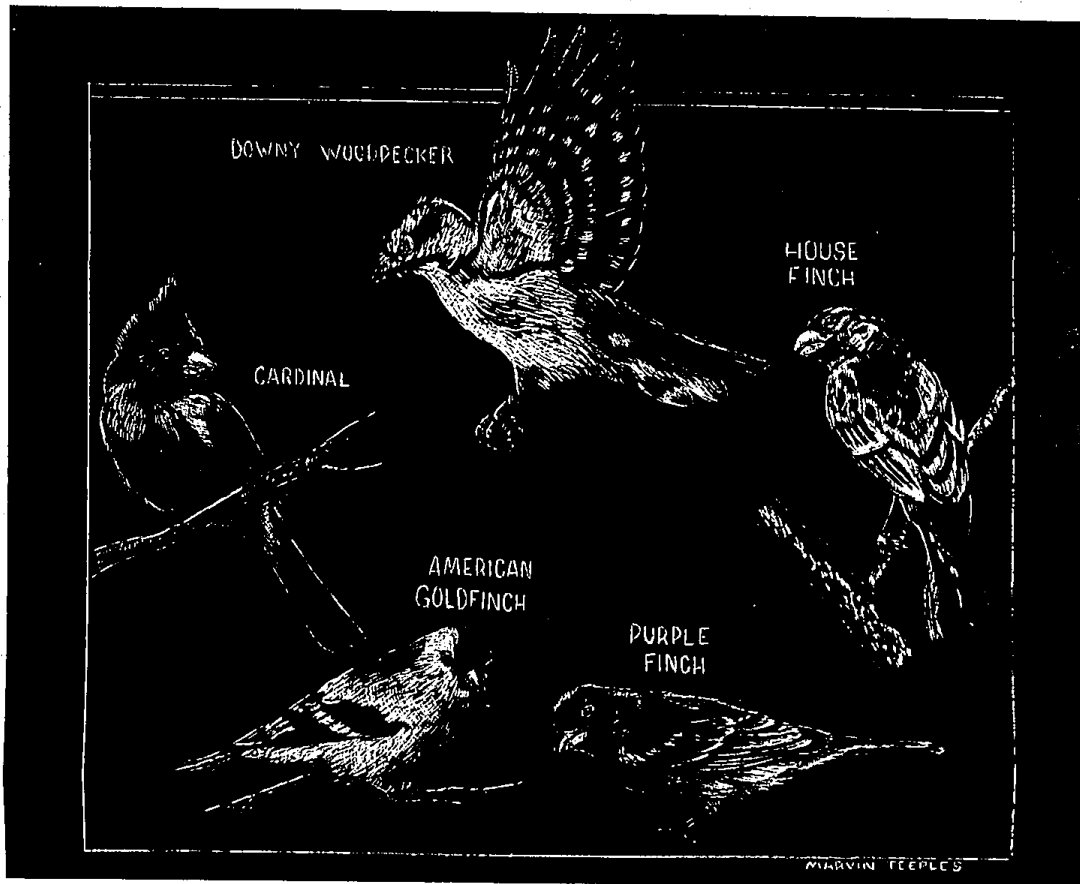
Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



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It's your choice

Beautifiers seek help choosing a bird as the cities' symbol

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

FARMINGTON AND Farmington Hills are without a bird that can be used as an official symbol for the two

cities. Those serving on the Farmington Beautification Committee and the Farmington Hills Beautification Commission ask for some input on the matter from the residents. "This is not a contest. Nobody is going to win anything. It might best

be called a survey," said Joe Derek speaking for Farmington Hills Beautification Commission. "What we are asking for is resident involvement, by simply stating your choice on the ballot and letting us know if you have a preference and, if you have the time and inclination, letting us know why you chose that particular bird."

Some time ago the Farmington Beautification Committee voted on its own to elect the day lily as the official city flower and the oak tree as the official city tree.

Both the day lily and the oak tree have since been adopted as official city symbols for Farmington Hills for no better reason than that both are indigenous to the area and both are highly visible.

"When we talked about an indigenous butterfly to the area there was no contest," Derek said. "The giant swallowtail is all over the place and is the only butterfly that is profuse enough here to be worthy as a city symbol."

"We have a lot of nodding thistle that grows wild here that is food for the giant swallowtail, so the two go together. Matter of fact it would be hard to find nodding thistle without the giant swallowtail, so if you want butterflies in your backyard, cultivate nodding thistle."

SELECTING A bird was not so easy.

"There are five species native to this area and anyone of them could serve as an official city symbol," said Derek, who is a naturalist, a teacher of many nature-type classes for Farmington Community Education, an outdoor educator, and an often called upon speaker on issues concerning conservation and the environment.

"We have no preference as to what bird is chosen," Derek said speaking for those who sit on the beautification boards. "Our interest

is getting the residents to look around and see what they see out here, appreciate it, take care of it. We want the residents to plant the trees, feed the birds."

"I guess most people recognize a cardinal or a woodpecker when they see one. We'd like them all to be able to identify a goldfinch, a purple finch, a house finch as well. These are your birds."

Derek sums up why the members of the beautification boards want residents to take a part in the survey when he says, "The wonders of nature surround us with daily beauty if one just takes the time to stop and enjoy it."

"Butterflies float from flower to flower, trees stand tall in all their beauty, flowers dazzle us with their color and fragrance, and birds greet each new day with song."

"These are treasures that are often overlooked in our busy, daily schedule. Take some time to learn about your birds."

THE CARDINAL is named after the red robes worn by Roman Catholic cardinals. Both sexes are accomplished songsters and may be heard at any time of year, rather than just in the spring when most other birds are singing. As in most members of the finch family, seeds form a main part of their diet, although insects are taken in the breeding season. They often come to bird feeders in the winter.

The Downy Woodpecker is the smallest, tamest and most abundant of the species. It comes readily to the suet rack in the suburban back yard and is a familiar sight in city parks, roadside shade trees, and shrubbery. It is a familiar bird in the assemblages of nuthatches, creepers, kinglets and chickadees that gather in the woods during the fall migration.

The Goldfinch is often called the "wild canary." The bird's main food



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is seeds, so in long does not begin until mid or late summer when weed seeds are available. Goldfinches stay in flocks long after other species have formed pairs and are nesting. Because they nest so late, only a single brood is raised each season. In the winter they gather in large flocks, often with other finches.

The House Finch descended from songbirds released in New York in the 1930s. For years they barely survived on Long Island, but then started to spread until they established themselves in New York City with their cheerful song and bright colors. The eating habits of these birds are not well known, but it is suspected they survive on berries

and in fact put out for the more abundant than Sparrows.

The Purple Finch is numerous and conspicuous in spring migration. For a few weeks each year you can hear the spirited song of the brightly colored males. In winter the birds visit feeding stations in large numbers, and show a fondness for sunflower seeds.

Ballots are to be mailed on or before March 15 to Esther Frank, Community Relations Department, City of Farmington Hills, 31555 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hill 48018. Attn: City Symbol Survey.

The information on the five birds was supplied through the courtesy of The Audubon Society.

BIRD BALLOT

Please vote for ONE bird only

The nominees are:

- Cardinal
- Downy woodpecker
- House Finch
- Goldfinch
- Purple Finch

Your name _____

Address _____

(Please mail ballot with this ballot to the City of Farmington Hills)

Comments _____

All ballots must be returned to Esther Frank

60 Farmington Hills City Hall
31555 11 Mile Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

The DEADLINE is March 15