



Saving an ecological jewel
on the island of Montreal

Description

The collective momentum to protect our urban greenspaces is growing

By **Katherine Collin**, co-organizer Technoparc Oiseaux

July 20, 2022

The fight to protect the 215 hectares of natural greenspace, wetlands, and rewilded grasslands in the **Technoparc** and adjacent federal lands is now in its seventh year. **Technoparc Oiseaux** has been at the helm of this battle and what has driven us, particularly in the past two years, is the idea that everyday people when armed with scientific facts and dogged optimism, can spur real change and connection.



Canada Goose with gosling, 2022

We have routinely been told by politicians that the dossier is too complex to be resolved quickly, too densely knotted to be understood clearly by the broad public.

We have systematically begged to differ.

Observers have quickly grasped the value of the site and come out by the hundreds to document its vast biodiversity, with thousands of verifiable records made via user-friendly citizen-science platforms such as **iNaturalist** and [eBird](#).

In addition to maintaining on-site trails and feeders, Technoparc Oiseaux has overseen the creation of **four separate citizen-science projects** for the site and has been instrumental in sharing this project knowledge with the broader Montreal community, notably by hosting [Greater Montreal's participation](#) in the **global iNaturalist City Nature Challenge** this past spring.

For the past four years, Technoparc Oiseaux has also inventoried and tagged monarch butterflies on site under the auspices of the **international Monarch Watch program**. These biodiversity observations speak for themselves with no need for political spin and as such, they are very difficult to dismiss: the site is teeming with plants and wildlife, constituting a true ecological jewel on the island of Montreal.

A community of supporters has been forged, with scores of people raising their voices to protect the space, including the **Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke** and **40 civic organizations**. Citizens have rallied by writing and calling their municipal, provincial and federal representatives, by marching and by signing petitions, the most recent of which has amassed 10,000 signatures in a matter of days and is [still open](#).



Great Egret, 2022

While it may seem at times that these calls have gone unheeded, with elected officials deferring or ignoring the urgency to act, we are cautiously optimistic that the tide is changing. We see this change in the public's growing frustration with the **Montreal Airport Authority (ADM)** whose rash decision to mow down the lush pollinating grassland known as the Monarch Fields has been met with [swift condemnation](#) from politicians across the spectrum calling for redress.

... We have to react... We have to find a way to protect the urban greenspaces that we have because this is the legacy that we are going to be leaving for future generations.

[Dida Berku](#), City of Côte Saint-Luc councillor

A little over a week ago, **Marwah Rizqy** and **Alexandre Boulerice** [stood together](#) to support Technoparc Oiseaux in calling for the space to be protected. **Monique PaUZé**, a long-standing supporter of the site, likewise gave [a strident warning](#) to the federal government to act urgently to conserve the portions of the site under federal control.

In mid-July 2022, the **City of Côte Saint-Luc** [unanimously issued a stunning call](#) to the federal government to act to protect the space. **Dida Berku**, in discussing the resolution, put it simply, "This is basically why I am a city councillor. Here we are in 2022. We have to react... We have to find a way to protect the urban greenspaces that we have because this is the legacy that we are going to be leaving for future generations."



Monarch Butterfly on Purple Loosestrife, 2022

Technoparc Oiseaux urges all cities and boroughs on the island of Montreal to pass similar resolutions. Everyday citizens are encouraged to urgently share the [Côte Saint-Luc resolution](#) with their city or borough council members, asking them to draft their own resolution in support of protecting the Technoparc and adjacent federal lands.

Federal MPs whose ridings are on the island of Montreal can also be alerted to the necessity to act. The Côte Saint-Luc resolution is an excellent model to follow.

Technoparc Oiseaux, for its part, will continue to work quietly and tirelessly to advance our citizen-science efforts with the firm belief that the connections we make with nature actually connect us to each other as well. The power we have as observers of nature is not as small and ineffective as we may be sometimes led to believe.

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Our ability as everyday citizen-scientists and nature lovers to document the ecological value of our urban greenspaces has been nothing short of transformative. We continue to hold out every hope that more political representatives will recognize our (literal) grassroots efforts and join us in urging the protection of this precious 215-hectare site.



Images: Kevin Verreault

Feature image: wetlands of Monarch Fields 2021

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Technoparc Oiseaux is a citizen-mobilization group of over 4800 members working to protect and restore the wetlands, rewilded greenspaces, and natural habitats of the Technoparc and adjacent federal lands.



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Date Created

July 2022