



...For the Birds

by Cindy Knowles

The Birdhouses for Swan Lake Park project was born when Fred Peters of Friends of Swan Lake Park asked Bill Dewberry of the Markham Lions Club if the club would be interested in helping with a plan to promote more avian activity around our lake.

Markham Lions Club, under Bill Dewberry's leadership, enthusiastically undertook the project, hoping to entice participation from local seniors and local high school students. FOSLP donated the first birdhouse, while the Lions secured an additional dozen or more birdhouses to kickstart the project.

After FOSLP members undertook the initial research, relying on specifications available online from the

Ornithology Department of Cornell University in New York, it was evident that the undertaking would be a little more complicated than nailing a box to a nearby tree.

Members identified species known to have been seen in Swan Lake Park during the breeding season. Of the 40 species recorded, 11 of these might use a birdhouse, and five are listed as species in need of help in urban areas. The five species which require the most assistance are the great crested flycatcher, northern flicker, tree swallow, red-breasted nuthatch and white-breasted nuthatch. Their different sizes will need openings of different sizes; therefore, the existing birdhouses will require modification. Many birds prefer some distance from other nests of the same species, so the Markham Lions Club will need guidance from the City of Markham as to where to place the birdhouses.

We hope to have some birdhouses in place for the breeding season which begins in March. The tiny accommodations will benefit not only our feathered friends, but the many avid birdwatchers in our community. □