

Barriers To Building Wildlife-Inclusive Cities and Encouraging Collaboration Across Disciplines

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Usually, cities are thought of as human spaces. However, they are home to countless plants, animals, and other forms of life as well. Cities are the most rapidly growing land use type and, as such, have a significant impact on the wellbeing of wildlife. As the world faces high levels of species extinction, the need to create cities where people and animals can coexist becomes ever more pressing.

The new field of wildlife-inclusive urban planning and design responds to this need by creating a collaborative space where wildlife ecologists and urban planners and designers can come together to share their knowledge and expertise. This field aims to generate research and development that allows wildlife, nature, and people to thrive. However, due to differences in the goals, interests, and background of these disciplines, collaborative work is difficult to actualize.

The 2019 Urban Wildlife Information Network Summit responded to this need by connecting a group of 80 scientists and urban planners and designers to discuss the barriers that prevent collaborative work from becoming a reality. We explore the challenges to network building for wildlife-inclusive design and planning revealed by the Summit and offer potential solutions for overcoming these obstacles for more effective collaboration. Barriers include divisions between fields, differing motivations, a lack of funding, differences in timeline, difficulties of working around existing infrastructure, and differences of opinions and beliefs. This paper offers many solutions ranging from alternative tenure tracks to interdisciplinary undergraduate coursework to assessing the opinions and beliefs of collaborators at the start of a project. Creating a culture where collaboration is the default will lead to cities where people and wildlife can thrive, helping us build a sustainable future.



*Photo from the Urban Wildlife Information Network's 2019 Summit. Photo by Chris Bijalba, Lincoln Park Zoo.*

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