

Tree Martin Management 2025-2026 End of Season Report

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Public

Tuesday, 4 August 2026

City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee

Program Contact:

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Approving Officer:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an end of season report on the 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season (**Attachment A**), covering the period from December 2025 to June 2026, in response to Council's decision of 2 December 2025 ([Link 1](#)).

On 4 November 2025 the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs (CPDBA) Committee received an overview of the proposed management actions, across two concurrent phases, for the 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season:

- Phase 1 – A coordinated approach to community amenity, public safety, business vitality and the welfare of wildlife for the 2026 roosting season (operational response).
- Phase 2 – A Tree Martin Management Plan that looks at operational, medium and longer-term strategies for managing the annual tree martin roosting season.

This report addresses the operational response (Phase 1) covering monitoring data, stakeholder engagement, mitigation measures and their effectiveness, incident outcomes, costs, impacts and challenges, and recommendations to inform the 2026–27 season and the finalisation of the Tree Martin Management Plan.

Phase 2 – Tree Martin Management Plan is the subject of a separate report in this Agenda (Item 7.2).

Tree Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) are protected under a combination of Federal and State legislation, as well as international agreements. Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA), they are classified as a "protected animal," meaning it is an offence to interfere with, harass or molest them unless acting under a legislative provision or a permit granted by the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water or their delegate. The *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (SA) further requires that all reasonable measures be taken to prevent unnecessary harm, injury or distress to wildlife.

Taken together, this legislative framework requires that Tree Martin management activities be conducted by appropriately permitted and trained personnel, that disturbance to roosting birds be minimised, and that any handling or management be conducted humanely.

The 2025-26 season marked the first year in which the City of Adelaide deployed a structured, resourced on-ground response at Rundle Mall for the management of Tree Martins. The operational response incorporated specialist environmental consultants, dedicated security and customer service staff, formal Wildlife Management (Controller) permits, veterinary care, and coordinated stakeholder engagement.

The City of Adelaide's 2025-26 roosting season operational response represented a significant increase in operational scale and complexity compared to prior seasons, delivering improved bird welfare outcomes and greater operational consistency.

Mitigation measures to reduce bird injuries were implemented throughout the season. While there is evidence of their effectiveness, incidents were not eliminated entirely. The specific urban environment in Rundle Mall continues to present challenges for Tree Martins, with bird strikes and building entrapments occurring throughout the season.

Tree Martin management also required responses by nearby businesses, including increased cleaning requirements, odour and amenity issues, business disruptions, customer complaints and impacts on trading environments. Engagement with affected businesses was maintained throughout the season to provide updates, share mitigation advice and respond to concerns and incidents.

A small number of businesses invested in additional measures to support the response which included window decals, additional security, and internal cleaning.

Businesses closest to the roosting trees received regular updates and support throughout the season, with an evening on-ground presence also facilitating engagement with members of the public seeking information or wishing to provide feedback.

At the time of writing, the majority of the Tree Martin population that peaked at 20,540 had migrated. There does however remain a small population of up to 1,500 birds roosting in Rundle Mall. While migration was anticipated by end of May 2026, higher minimum temperatures compared with 2025 has delayed this and may be a contributing factor to a small number of birds still roosting.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 11 August 2026 for consideration

THAT THE CITY PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Receives the Tree Martin Management 2025-26 End of Season Report, as contained in Attachment A of Item 7.1 on the Agenda of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 August 2026.
 2. Notes the outcomes of the 2025-2026 Tree Martin roosting season and the End of Season Report (December 2025 to June 2026), including total operational and capital costs incurred of \$362,205.
 3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, to make minor amendments to the Tree Martin Management 2025-26 End of Season Report, as contained in Attachment A of Item 7.1 on the Agenda of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 August 2026.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Environment Lead and advocate for the environmental value, productivity, quality and biodiversity of the Park Lands, squares, open space and streetscapes. Protect and restore native habitat in our city.
Policy	Management of Tree Martins aligns with the Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy – Towards 2036, the City of Adelaide’s Integrated Climate Strategy 2030, and the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan’s commitments to biodiversity protection, city amenity, business vitality and community wellbeing. It supports the Council’s objectives for a sustainable, liveable, and biodiverse capital city where people and wildlife coexist harmoniously. Management of the Tree Martins has been undertaken with regard to implications for businesses and Council’s Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028. The State Biodiversity Plan is yet to be developed following the assent of the <i>Biodiversity Act 2025</i> (SA).
Consultation	The Administration has continued to consult with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Green Adelaide to align approaches to Tree Martin management and protection. During the roosting season Administration has maintained contact with businesses in Rundle Mall and representatives from the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) who also form part of the internal Working Group overseeing the operational response. A briefing will be provided to the AEDA Board in September 2026.
Resource	The Tree Martin operational response used a combination of internal and external resources, including specialist consultancy services. Guidance and advice on operational responses have been provided by AEDA, business stakeholders, State Government agencies (inc. Green Adelaide and the Department for Environment and Water (DEW)) and other stakeholders.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Tree Martins are listed as a marine species under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth) (EPBC Act). Under ss 254–254E of the EPBC Act, offences apply to actions that harm, take, trade, keep, or move listed marine species; however, these provisions only apply within a designated “Commonwealth area” as defined in s 525. Based on current review, this definition has little to no application within the Council area, and neither Leigh Street nor Rundle Mall fall within Commonwealth land. Consequently, these EPBC Act provisions do not apply to Council actions. Tree Martins are a “protected animal” under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972</i> (SA). Under ss 68(1) a person must not interfere with, harass or molest a protected animal unless he or she acts in pursuance of a legislative provision or a permit granted by the responsible Minister (the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water) or their delegate. Advice from DEW is that a permit is not required outside of a roosting season for the netting of trees if this action does not lead to any protected animal being caught, restrained or trapped and subsequently relocated and the trees are netted prior to being used by the protected animal (i.e. outside of the Tree Martin roosting season). The <i>Animal Welfare Act 1985</i> (SA) requires that all reasonable measures are taken to prevent unnecessary harm, injury, or distress to wildlife. This includes monitoring for impacts of netting. The <i>Biodiversity Act 2025</i> (SA), which has not yet come into operation, introduces a general duty of care, requiring reasonable practical measures to prevent harm to biodiversity in any acts or actions undertaken. The City of Adelaide considers public health and safety risks in the public realm, noting responses actioned at previous roosting sites to address conflicts for public health at outdoor dining venues.

Opportunities	In 2025/26 the City of Adelaide took a planned and measured approach to managing the Tree Martin roosting season and planning for future roosting seasons. This approach enabled data and evidence to be collected to inform future management actions.
26/27 Budget Allocation	The total cost of the operational response for the 2025–26 roosting season was \$362,205, with \$150,000 allocated at the first quarter budget review and a further quarterly allocation for the balance reallocated from existing operational budgets. Pending a Council decision on the Tree Martin Management Plan, a budget allocation was not sought as part of the 2026/27 Business Plan and Budget. As the season occurs across financial years, Administration indicated it would seek allocation for the 2026-27 season following the end of the first full season as part of the 2026/27 Quarter 1 budget review.
Proposed 27/28 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Tree Martins typically migrate annually between November/December and April/May. While the roosting season was anticipated to conclude by end of May 2026 based on the previous season, at the time of writing this report, a small population of up to 1,500 birds remains roosting in Rundle Mall.
26/27 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	A budget review in Quarter 1 is foreshadowed in this report.
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Operating costs for delivery of the response and additional cleansing as part of the 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season were managed within existing resources. Ongoing operating costs will be assessed as part of future Tree Martin management decisions.
Other Funding Sources	DEW and Green Adelaide provided in kind advice for the 2025-2026 Tree Martin roosting season management response. Administration has raised the potential for external funding support from the State Government but no eligible grant funding stream has been identified.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an end of season report on the 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season, which occurred from December 2025 to June 2026 (See **Attachment A**).

Background

2. At its meeting on 22 April 2025, Council noted a range of Tree Martin management actions undertaken by the Administration in collaboration with Green Adelaide and requested further advice in relation to Tree Martin management support measures ([Link 2](#)).
3. At its meeting on 13 May 2025, Administration provided further background information on when the Tree Martins were first identified as a significant problem ([Link 3](#)).
4. At its meeting on 14 October 2025, Council received an update on the matter in response to Council's decision on 22 April 2025 ([Link 4](#)).
5. A workshop ([Link 5](#)) and report ([Link 6](#)) were presented to the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs (CPDBA) Committee on 4 November 2025 where an overview of the proposed management actions, across two concurrent phases, for the upcoming Tree Martin roosting season was provided.
 - 5.1. Phase 1 – A coordinated approach to community amenity, public safety, business vitality and the welfare of wildlife for the 2026 migratory season (operational response).
 - 5.2. Phase 2 – A Tree Martin Management Plan that looks at operational, medium and longer-term strategies for managing the annual tree martin roosting season.
6. At its meeting on 11 November 2025 ([Link 7](#)), Council noted the report and resolved in part 3 of its decision, that it:
 3. *Requests administration provide preliminary advice regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall at a special meeting of Council to be held on Tuesday 2 December 2025.*
7. At its meeting on 2 December 2025, Council resolved it:
 1. *Receives the preliminary advice provided regarding the feasibility, benefits and disbenefits of netting trees in Rundle Mall as contained in Attachment A to Item 6.1 on the Agenda of the Special Council meeting held on 2 December 2025.*
 2. *Notes that while netting is technically feasible, it poses operational, welfare and reputational risks, and therefore is not recommended for implementation in Rundle Mall during the 2025/26 Tree Martin migratory season.*
 3. *Approves the continued mitigation and monitoring strategies for the 2025/26 Tree Martin migratory season and reviews the data collected and options developed through this season for implementation ahead of the 2026/27 season in partnership with the Department for Environment and Water and Green Adelaide.*

Legislative Framework

8. The management of Tree Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) in South Australia is governed by a combination of Federal Government and State Government legislation, as well as obligations arising from international agreements.
9. Taken together, the legislative framework requires that Tree Martin management activities be conducted by appropriately permitted and trained personnel, that disturbance to roosting birds be minimised, and that any handling or management of birds be conducted humanely.
10. The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) has confirmed that activities to deter, exclude or scare native animals do not require a permit under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA), provided no harm results. Actions to catch, move or kill a protected animal, require a permit and decision from DEW.

2025-2026 Tree Martin roosting season

11. The 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season was the first year in which the City of Adelaide deployed a structured and resourced on-ground operational response at Rundle Mall.
12. The operational response incorporated specialist environmental consultants, dedicated security, customer service staff, and formal Wildlife Management (Controller) permits, alongside veterinary care and coordinated engagement with key stakeholders.

13. The roosting season commenced on 15 December 2025, when Tree Martins were first seen roosting in Rundle Mall. Based on records from the 2024-25 season, the Tree Martins were expected to migrate at the end of May 2026, however, at the time of writing this report, a small population of up to 1,500 birds remains roosting in Rundle Mall.
14. Management of the Tree Martin colony in the 2025-26 roosting season was guided by three key objectives:
 - 14.1. Ensure bird welfare and compliance with wildlife protection and animal welfare legislation.
 - 14.2. Maintain business operation, public amenity and safety in high-use areas, including Rundle Mall and adjacent laneways.
 - 14.3. Enhance community understanding of the species and the City of Adelaide's role in managing urban wildlife responsibly.

On-ground response

15. To undertake data collection and triage of injured birds, local wildlife management specialists Avisure were engaged and supported by Administration, a Rundle Mall security guard and a customer service officer.
16. An additional 35 City of Adelaide staff from across the Park Lands Planning, City Cleansing, City Operations and City Library teams received Tree Martin response training and were listed on the Wildlife Controller permit to allow for a rapid response to Tree Martin incidents as required.
17. Administration engaged with local wildlife volunteer organisations in October 2025 to understand their interest and capacity to support the care of injured Tree Martins during the season.
 - 17.1. Given their existing capacity limitations, a rostering solution was explored but ultimately not employed with the on-ground resourcing provided by Avisure and the Administration.
 - 17.2. On occasion, several volunteers attended Rundle Mall on Friday evenings during the season to observe the Tree Martins and were available to provide additional support if needed.

Monitoring and Observations

18. Monitoring of previous roosting sites (Leigh Street and Rundle Mall) and other locations with similar characteristics (Ebenezer Place and Vardon Avenue) commenced in October 2025.
19. Tree Martins were first observed roosting in Rundle Mall on 15 December 2025, with an initial count of approximately 30 birds, prompting the commencement of on-ground evening monitoring from that date.
20. Tree Martin numbers grew from an initial 30 birds to a peak of approximately 20,540 on 28 February 2026. Average roost numbers were highest during March 2026.
21. As at 30 June 2026, triage for stunned, injured and deceased birds was highest during the evening (5pm – 9pm) monitoring (1,511 birds) and lower during the daytime (262 birds).
22. To 30 June 2026, of the triaged birds, 670 were deceased, 256 injured and provided with veterinary care and 847 were stunned and were successfully released.
23. The majority of incidents were due to building/window strikes, wire strikes and birds flying into shops and being unable to find their way out.
24. Over the course of the season, the on-ground team responded to requests from businesses to capture birds that had entered private buildings.
 - 24.1. This was undertaken with the permission and support of the business premise.
 - 24.2. Conditions were often challenging due to high ceilings and limited access to elevated areas.
 - 24.3. Tree Martin survival rates declined the longer birds remained in buildings.
 - 24.4. Birds left indoors overnight increased cleaning requirements for products and interiors.
25. At the time of writing this report, up to 1,500 Tree Martins were continuing to roost in Rundle Mall. Migration was anticipated by end of May 2026; however, minimum temperatures have been higher than in 2025 and may be contributing to an extended roosting season.

Veterinary care

26. Whilst there are several veterinarians across metropolitan Adelaide that provide care for injured wildlife, options for this level of specialised avian care are limited within Adelaide.

27. To ensure bird welfare and compliance with wildlife protection and animal welfare legislation, injured Tree Martins unable to be released after observation on-site and / or found in the morning or during the day were taken to the Adelaide Bird and Exotics Vet Centre for assessment and treatment.
28. The Adelaide Bird and Exotics Vet Centre provided a regular day service as well as an on-call evening service, as most incidents occurred outside standard business hours.

Mitigation measures

29. In December 2025, specialist Environmental Consultants, Ecosure were engaged to review and provide recommendations on mitigation measures for businesses to consider that would reduce Tree Martin injuries and entry into businesses. The review also identified measures the City of Adelaide could implement to reduce the likelihood of bird injury or death.
30. Prevention and mitigation measures were shared with businesses, including:
 - 30.1. Closing doors or reducing the width of storefront entry points
 - 30.2. Hanging visual deterrents (such as Owl / Falcon cutouts provided by the City of Adelaide)
 - 30.3. Dimming of store lighting and visual displays
 - 30.4. Application of window film / decals.
31. Of these treatments, window film / decals applied to glazed shop fronts proved to be the most effective mitigation for bird strike and resulted in a significant reduction in window strikes.
32. Closing doors or reducing the width of storefront entry points were effective at reducing building ingress by birds as they descended into the roosting trees at dusk or because of flushing (when birds fly rapidly out of the trees as they try and settle for the night).
33. The City of Adelaide trialled two products on the catenary lighting system in Rundle Mall to reduce wire strike incidents: wire markers (small round discs) and silicone protective coverings.
34. The wire markers proved insufficient on their own, leading to the exploration of alternative measures and the adoption of protective tubing known as 'Possum Tails'.
 - 34.1. Wire strikes decreased following installation of the 'Possum Tails', though a reduction in roosting numbers may also have contributed to this decline.
35. Day and evening monitoring throughout the roosting season served as the primary data collection mechanism and enabled timely triage response, proving highly effective for both bird welfare outcomes and data quality.
36. While there is evidence that mitigation measures were effective in reducing bird injuries, they did not eliminate all incidents.
37. The Rundle Mall urban environment presented unique challenges for Tree Martin management and birds strikes with building entrapments continued throughout the season.

Communication and engagement

38. Pre-season consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders including the DEW, Green Adelaide, RSPCA, wildlife volunteer organisations, AEDA and priority businesses impacted during the 2024-25 roosting season.
39. Information postcards to raise awareness about the roosting season and how to prepare for changes due to end of daylight savings were distributed to the wider Rundle Mall business precinct.
40. Signage was installed in Rundle Mall to raise awareness about the Tree Martin colony and to provide direction for responding to injured Tree Martins, including a QR code that linked to the City of Adelaide Tree Martin webpage.
41. Members of the public contacted the City of Adelaide to report Tree Martins needing assistance. Assistance from the City of Adelaide was available from 6am to 9pm prior to the end of daylight savings and to 8pm post the end of daylight savings.
42. The City of Adelaide and the on-ground response team communicated with businesses surrounding the roosting area to provide mitigation recommendations and project updates.
43. The on-ground response team communicated with businesses surrounding the roosting area as needed with a Friday night focus (late night shopping) to ensure business staff were able to request assistance if needed.

44. The on-ground response team engaged with members of the public who were interested in finding out more or who wanted to provide feedback.

Business and event impacts

45. The presence of Tree Martins roosting in Rundle Mall generated a range of impacts for nearby businesses throughout the season, including increased cleaning requirements, odour and amenity issues, business disruptions, customer complaints and impacts on trading environments.
46. The accumulation of bird droppings was the most consistent issue, creating odour and amenity concerns at times for businesses, customers and the broader public. This was more prominent later in the season when larger numbers of birds had used the roosting site and due to wetter weather conditions.
47. Several businesses noted cleaning requirements increased significantly, particularly those with outdoor areas, shopfronts and product displays directly beneath or near the roosting trees.
48. To support affected businesses, the City of Adelaide implemented additional cleaning and deodorising of outdoor furniture, paved surfaces and the stormwater system in proximity to the roosting trees.
49. On occasions, birds entering business premises required intervention from the on-ground response team to safely remove and triage birds found inside. In one instance, an incursion of approximately 100 birds resulted in a business being closed for two days and partially closed on a third day while the situation was resolved and cleaning was undertaken. It should be noted that mitigation strategies for businesses put forward by Administration had not been adopted in this location.
50. The evening peak in roosting activity coincided with trading hours for businesses, meaning customer-facing impacts, including odour, noise and the presence of distressed or injured birds, occurred during periods of high foot traffic in Rundle Mall.
51. Multiple events were held in Rundle Mall during the roosting season, including major State-supported events and activations that contribute to visitation and economic activity. The on-ground Tree Martin response team, the Rundle Mall Team (AEDA), and event organisers communicated closely to reduce impacts near the roosting trees, with the primary risks to birds relating to vehicles brushing roosting trees and loud noises; and conversely to the community from bird faeces. In general, these activities had minimal impact on the Tree Martin management response.
52. The presence of the roost created limitations for events and activations, including restricting zones available for activation and revenue generation, the need to minimise disruption to the roost site, health considerations associated with bird droppings and odour, and additional operational requirements for event organisers. It should be noted that the roosting location is not a high activity zone.
53. Odour was identified as an issue during several events, including Colours of Asia and AFL Gather Round activations conducted within Rundle Mall. Additional daily high-pressure cleaning, deodorising and stormwater drain cleansing were implemented to manage these impacts during event periods.
54. Additional mitigation measures were required for contractors undertaking tenancy fit-outs and maintenance works within proximity of the roosting trees. These measures included timing adjustments, modified work practices and increased monitoring to minimise disturbance to the birds. In some instances, these requirements impacted work schedules, access arrangements and the ability to undertake certain activities as planned during peak roosting periods.
55. The accumulation of bird droppings within pedestrian areas also presented a potential broader public amenity concern for Rundle Mall visitors. While routine cleaning and additional cleansing measures were implemented throughout the season, exposure to bird droppings had the potential to reduce visitor comfort, particularly in areas directly beneath or adjacent to roosting sites.
56. These impacts underscore the need for effective mitigation measures, including early-season business engagement and consideration of longer-term management, dispersal and mitigation approaches in future roosting seasons.

Other challenges

57. The on-ground team encountered anti-social behaviour on several occasions and the morning cleansing team on one occasion.
58. There were 11 observed instances of a member of the public deliberately disturbing roosting trees causing birds to flush resulting in Tree Martin incidents that included injury and fatality.

H5 Bird Flu

59. At the commencement of the 2025-26 roosting season there were no known cases of H5 Bird Flu in Australia.
60. Notwithstanding this, given the migratory nature of Tree Martins, Administration met with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) in February 2026 to discuss the implications and reporting obligations for Council in the event H5 Bird Flu was detected while Tree Martins were roosting in Rundle Mall.
61. Several confirmed cases of H5 Bird Flu have now been announced in South Australia since the first announcement on 24 June 2026. No cases have been identified in the City of Adelaide.
62. PIRSA is the lead agency for H5 Bird Flu. In terms of Council's role and obligations, no additional statutory responsibilities arise beyond standard public health and biosecurity cooperation, with the State Government via PIRSA.
63. Administration is maintaining a heightened awareness and precautionary approach in line with current State Government guidance, including appropriate PPE protocols when handling deceased birds or cleaning droppings.

Costs

64. The total cost of the operational response for the 2025–26 roosting season was \$362,205, with \$150,000 allocated at the first quarter budget review and a further quarterly allocation for the balance reallocated from existing operational budgets.
65. Of the \$362,205 total expenditure, \$344,108 was for strategic and operational items, with the remaining \$18,097 representing capital expenditure for the purchase of equipment available for reuse in future.
66. The above costs are exclusive of internal City of Adelaide staffing and additional cleansing which were managed within existing operating budgets.

Next Steps

67. The following next steps are proposed:
 - 67.1. Update the dedicated Tree Martin project webpage on the City of Adelaide website with advice about the 2025-26 season.
 - 67.2. Communicate with State Government Agencies, businesses, wildlife organisations and key stakeholders on the outcomes of the 2025-2026 season.
 - 67.3. Review and update the City of Adelaide's Tree Martin Operating Guidelines, established for the 2025-26 season to reflect the experience and outcomes of the season for Chief Executive Officer approval.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 – [Minutes – Council – Tuesday, 2 December 2025](#)

Link 2 – [Minutes – Council – Tuesday, 22 April 2025](#)

Link 3 – [Council - Question on Notice Reply – Tuesday, 13 May 2025](#)

Link 3 – [Agenda – Council – Tuesday, 14 October 2025](#)

Link 4 – [Agenda – Workshop – City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee, Tuesday, 4 November 2025](#)

Link 5 – [Agenda – City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee, Tuesday, 4 November 2025](#)

Link 6 – [Council - Minutes – Tuesday, 11 November 2025](#)

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Tree Martin Management End of Season Report, July 2026

- END OF REPORT -