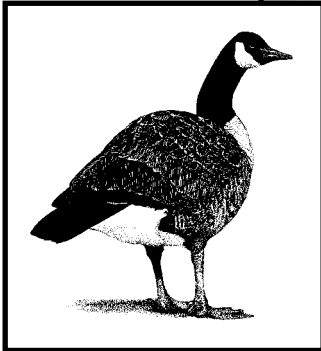


## Division of Wildlife

# DON'T FEED THE GEESE



## GENERAL BACKGROUND

People residing in urban and suburban areas enjoy seeing and interacting with wildlife. Feeding ducks and geese brings these birds into proximity to people. People that feed wildlife feel they are helping the birds and this provides these people with a sense of well-being and excitement. To the ducks and geese, however, the result of relying on handouts is devastating. Feeding popcorn, bread, or shelled corn is like feeding a child junk food since the geese are not receiving a balanced diet. This activity is a very selfish pursuit when only one party, humans, derives a benefit.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GEESE LOSE THEIR FEAR OF HUMANS?

Geese that are fed by well-meaning people lose their natural fear of man and reside closer than normal to humans. This can lead to violent attacks during the nesting season (March, April, May), especially to people who are afraid of geese. Most injuries occur when the person is backing away from the attacking gander and trips over a curb, planter, bumper block, or steps. Parks, businesses, apartment or condo associations may be held legally liable for physical or psychological damages. Thus, the goose feeding creates justifiable public health and safety concerns.



# Don't Feed the Geese

## NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF FEEDING

- ☛ Lack of balanced diet may cause wing deformity in goslings, hindering the bird's flight ability
- ☛ Feeding causes overcrowding allowing diseases such as botulism and cholera to spread easily and possibly result in massive waterfowl die-offs
- ☛ Geese lose their fear of humans and become aggressive
- ☛ Feeding reduces the need for geese to migrate so they stay in an area longer and create more problems

## WHY BIRD NUMBERS AND PROBLEMS INCREASE WITH FEEDING

Feeding waterfowl attracts and keeps so many birds that the biological carrying capacity (how many birds the environment can naturally support) is exceeded, and the birds are staying only because of the unnatural feeding activity by humans. This leads to damage to the grounds, (i.e., grass destroyed, people walking through feces and bringing the feces, on shoes, into restaurants, work or homes). Goose droppings at parks are also a concern to the parents of children playing in the parks. The cultural carrying capacity (how many geese people can tolerate) is usually much lower than the biological carrying capacity. Park, business, apartment/condo or facility managers are faced with a dilemma each day – “how do I get rid of the overpopulated geese or ducks.”

## WHAT CAN FACILITY MANAGERS DO TO STOP THE FEEDING

Facility or park managers need to educate their constituents about the potential hazards to geese and people associated with feeding waterfowl. Newsletters, pamphlets, and/or signs are usually the easiest and most convenient method to convey the message.

Newsletters or pamphlets should be distributed to employees, associates, and members. This publication can be duplicated and/or reprinted as you see fit. Signs requiring or urging people not to feed the ducks and geese can be placed at picnic or eating areas, parking lots, beaches, etc. People can still interact with wildlife, just leave the food at home.

If we truly care for waterfowl, here is what we can do to improve their chances of survival:

- 1.) **Stop feeding** the ducks and geese. Help them to retain their “wildness” and maintain their health. They do not understand nutrition
- 2.) Learn more about waterfowl by visiting a library, nature center, zoo, museum, or a state wildlife area --- then teach your friends and family what stewardship of wildlife is all about.

### Division of Wildlife Headquarters

(614) 265-6300  
1-800-750-0750 (TTY)  
1-800-WILDLIFE

Wildlife District One  
(614) 644-3925

Wildlife District Two  
(419) 424-5000

Wildlife District Three  
(330) 644-2293

Wildlife District Four  
(740) 589-9930

Wildlife District Five  
(937) 372-9261

