



**U. S. Department of Agriculture
Wildlife Services, Derry Township,
& Mifflin County Conservation
District**



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Informational Sheet
**MANAGING WATERFOWL DAMAGE
AT KISH PARK**

Introduction

Canada geese, ducks, and other waterfowl are valuable natural resources enjoyed by bird watchers and the general public. The US Fish and Wildlife Service classify Canada geese and mallard ducks as migratory birds and are provided protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Currently, non-migratory “resident” waterfowl populations are increasing dramatically in urban/suburban environments in Pennsylvania, such as Kish Park. Waterfowl living in urban/suburban areas are relatively sheltered from predators and hunters and may receive food handouts from people. Resident Canada geese are particularly opportunistic and can easily become accustomed to people.



Although most people find a few birds acceptable, problems quickly develop as bird numbers increase. Many times, large waterfowl populations raise concerns about risks to human health and safety and also damage to residential, commercial, and public property. Common concerns include reduced water quality and general health risks due to excessive concentrations of fecal material, injury to people due to aggressive behavior of nesting birds (particularly geese), and damage to landscape plantings, turf grass from overgrazing. Furthermore, a large, year-round population of grazing and defecating waterfowl can seriously impede the public’s ability to enjoy properties such as Kish Park for its intended use.

Negative Impacts

1. Human Health and Safety

An average goose deposits 1 pound of feces every day. Goose droppings may pose a health threat due to the presence of disease-causing organisms, particularly chlamydiosis, e-coli, and salmonella. The birds can shed the bacteria through feces, nasal discharge, or when someone is bitten. Large amounts of goose droppings in water bodies can severely reduce water quality and has on occasion caused swimming areas to be closed. Geese may become aggressive in the spring and may injure adults, children, or pets that approach a nest too closely.

2. Damage

Excessive accumulations of goose droppings can physically damage property and also make using an area difficult or unpleasant. Clean up efforts can be costly or practically impossible in places such as athletic fields. Grazing geese trample and damage turf grass and landscape plantings which impacts aesthetics and can result in erosion. Natural resources such as native wetland habitats, wetland restoration sites, and the wildlife that depend on those resources may also be negatively affected by overgrazing.

Management Techniques

Wildlife Services (WS) and Derry Township will be implementing an Integrated Waterfowl Damage Management program that includes a variety of safe, practical, effective and legal techniques and approaches.

1. No Feeding Policy or Rule

Cessation of feeding is a necessary and important first step in reducing waterfowl damage. Derry Township issued a no feeding policy, Code of Township of Derry Chapter 158, § 12 b. Waterfowl that are fed by people are difficult or impossible to harass away, tend to congregate in large numbers, have a higher incidence of disease transmission (e.g., avian botulism), and may suffer from deformities and poor health due to nutritional deficiencies.

2. Domestic Ducks and Geese

Domestic ducks and geese serve as decoys, or attractants, for wild waterfowl. Since geese may learn to locate food resources by following the behavior of other birds, the presence of human-fed domestic waterfowl encourages wild birds to gather in unnatural concentrations and adopt detrimental foraging behavior. In addition, domestic waterfowl (as well as wild geese) can act as disease reservoirs, or continuous sources of potential disease outbreak. For example, domestic ducks and geese on a small pond may harbor a virus such as avian influenza and thus transmit it to



any migratory waterfowl that stop at the pond. Release of domestic waterfowl at Kish Park is discouraged. WS will remove all domestic waterfowl to minimize disease concerns.

3. *Harassment*

Harassment of waterfowl with pyrotechnics, vehicles, firearms, horns, paintballs, and other devices can be effective in reducing damage. Success depends on the technique, nature of the problem, the number and habits of birds present, and the timing and diligence of the harassment.

a. Pyrotechnics. Pyrotechnics are noise-making devices shot from a starter pistol (e.g., screamer sirens, bird bangers).

b. Other Harassment Devices. Incorporating the use of vehicles, horns, paintballs, firearms, lasers, remote controlled vehicles, and other noise-making devices increases the success in harassing waterfowl.



4. *Population Management*

Reproduction control of resident Canada geese can be accomplished through nest/egg treatments, also known as egg addling. WS will conduct nest/egg treatment, which entails coating each egg with 100% food-grade corn oil before incubation begins. This effectively eliminates embryo development by preventing oxygen from passing through the shell. Treated eggs are returned to the nest and the adult geese will remain attached to the nest site, but eggs will not hatch. The nest will be collected after the 30 day incubation period. Nest and egg treatment is recommended by the Humane Society of the United States as an effective non-lethal management option.



WS possesses the permit required for the management of nesting Canada geese and other waterfowl species such as mallard ducks. Domestic waterfowl are not protected and all nests will be removed immediately. Treatment or removal of eggs will not reduce the overall waterfowl population, but will slow its growth and make adults (not attached to young) more responsive to harassment. Additionally, fewer waterfowl will be associated with Kish Park throughout the spring and summer.

5. Shooting

Occasional shooting of a few geese may improve the effectiveness of other harassment efforts, and is generally referred to as “lethal reinforcement.” WS will safely utilize lethal reinforcement as necessary as part of the integrated waterfowl management program.

6. Capture and Removal.

Reduction of the local goose or mallard population could be accomplished by capturing and removing birds, pursuant to authorities listed in a Federal and State permit. Canada geese are most easily captured during the molt period when they are flightless (mid-June through mid-July). Geese can be captured with netted panel traps during the molt, or at other times of the year with rocket/cannon nets, dip nets and by hand. Once geese are captured, they are placed into poultry crates, transported off site, euthanized and buried/incinerated, or donated as a food source to charitable organizations. Population management is a last resort management option and is only used when other harassment techniques have been fully exhausted.

The relocation of geese, or any other nuisance wildlife, is not permitted in Pennsylvania due to the risk of the translocated animal causing damage and/or possibly spreading disease at the release site.

Legal Status

Canada geese are migratory game birds that are afforded Federal and State protection. Canada goose and mallard populations are managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Pennsylvania Game Commission pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USCS 703-711), Federal Regulations (50 CFR 10, 13, 20 & 21), Pennsylvania Statutes Annotated Title 23, the Pennsylvania Game Code, and other Federal and State laws, regulations, policies, and court rulings. Domestic varieties of waterfowl and mute swans are not afforded Federal or State protection.

Procedures such as capturing and euthanizing birds, shooting birds to reduce damage, and any other activity that includes handling birds requires a migratory bird depredation permit. WS possesses a migratory bird depredation permit through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove Canada geese and mallards.

Goal

USDA Wildlife Services, Derry Township, and the Mifflin County Conservation District are working together to create a healthy environment at Kish Park for both wildlife and the public. We are not looking to completely eliminate the waterfowl, but simply to manage the population at a biologically and socially acceptable level. The focus of the integrated waterfowl management program at Kish Park is for the general public to be able to enjoy the wildlife, while ensuring the wildlife remain healthy and wild. In order to do that, we need YOUR help by refraining from feeding the waterfowl and releasing domestic waterfowl into the park. Keep the wild in wildlife!

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