

WILDLIFE SMART

Don't feed or approach geese as this can place people and geese in closer proximity and increase risks for both.

COEXISTING WITH CANADA GEESE

Unlike most waterfowl, Canada geese consume food that they primarily find on land, rather than in water. Historically, this has meant extensive damage to agricultural crops, particularly during the fall migration. While agricultural producers continue to experience waterfowl crop depredation from Canada geese, these adaptable birds are now increasingly taking up residence in urban areas. This has resulted in increased conflicts with the people in urban areas, including increased risks to human safety, health and property damage.

There are things you can do to reduce the risk of conflicts with Canada geese. This fact sheet offers some helpful advice to protect yourself, your family, your property and geese.

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CANADA GEESE

- Geese feeding in an area can cause significant damage to lawns, parks, golf courses and agricultural crops.
- Goose droppings foul lawns, sidewalks, beaches and playgrounds. They can also degrade water quality on lakes and reservoirs, posing potential risks to human health.
- Geese walking on roadways can disrupt traffic flow and increase the risk of vehicle collisions.
- Geese flying near airports can be dangerous to arriving and departing aircraft.
- A goose can attack people or pets, particularly when it senses a threat to its young or nest.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONFLICT

Reduce risks for people

- Never approach a Canada goose. It may attack to protect itself or its young. Be aware that geese are especially protective while nesting.

Don't feed geese

- If geese become used to handouts from humans, they can lose their fear of people, putting both geese and people in closer proximity and at greater risk.
- Food given by people is generally less nutritious, and reliance on handouts can lead to malnourishment and possible death.
- Providing food to geese can delay their migration, resulting in added stress and mortality to geese.

- Providing nutrient-rich food has the potential to increase goose reproduction and survival rates. This can lead to increased goose populations and increased goose droppings that can degrade water quality on lakes and reservoirs and increase threats to human health. As well, it can lead to more areas on land that are fouled by goose droppings, such as lawns, sidewalks, beaches and playgrounds.
- Supplemental feeding can also lead to artificially increased goose populations that the habitat may not be able to sustain. This can cause long-term damage to that habitat, both for geese and other wildlife. It can also result in increased damage to agricultural crops.

Reduce the risk of vehicle collisions

Be alert

- In the spring and early summer, when many geese are flightless and move about by walking.
- On roads alongside waterbodies, and other areas geese are known to frequent.

If a goose approaches or crosses the road:

- Slow down and check your rearview mirror.
- Flash your headlights to warn other drivers.
- Leave a safe amount of distance between you and other drivers.
- If the goose crosses, brake firmly and stop only if you can do so safely.
- Avoid swerving – you could lose control or crash into another vehicle.
- Avoid stopping – continue to move through the area slowly, honking your horn if necessary to get the geese to move off the road.

If you encounter geese on the road, slow down and avoid swerving.



Reduce the risk of property damage

Exclusion

- Fencing or other physical barriers can be effective where geese tend to land on water and walk up onto adjacent lawns to feed or rest.
- Fencing should be at least 75 centimetres (cm) tall and built solidly. The fencing should completely enclose the protected area.
- Options to consider for exclusion include: wood fencing, chain link mesh, shrubs or hedgerows, boulders, and temporary fencing, such as plastic snow fence or nylon mesh.
- Grid systems formed from wire, cable, twine or rope can be stretched 30 to 50 cm over ponds or newly planted areas. Use poles or floats as needed to support a grid over an extended area.

Scaring devices

- The use of scaring devices can be effective, at least on a temporary basis. Geese can become familiar with the presence, noise or action of these devices, making their effectiveness short-lived. To prevent habituation and prolong the scaring effect, change the type of device or move them around the property on a regular basis. Be considerate of your neighbours when choosing appropriate devices.
- Device options to consider include:
 - **Strobe lights or lasers:** Bright, flashing lights can disturb geese between dusk and dawn. Bird scare laser devices can be used in low light conditions, and are effective at a distance of several hundred metres.
 - **Motion-activated devices:** lights, water-sprayers and noise-makers.
 - **Noise-making devices:** radios, goose distress calls, goose predator calls (preferably used in combination with the appropriate predator effigy), propane-fired scare cannons (in rural areas where by-laws permit).
 - **Effigies (scare-crow type figures) of goose predators:** human, eagle, swan or coyote
 - **Other predator images:** helium balloons with graphics of large predator eyes, or kites shaped like large birds of prey.



- **Flags:** these can be constructed from a black plastic garbage bag (0.6 metre by 1 metre) and mounted on a tall pole at least 2.5 metres above the ground. Cut three slits in the end of the flag to make four flaps.
- **Streamers:** lengths of shiny or bright materials strung between stakes, poles or trees and allowed to move in the wind.

Landscape modification

- Minimize areas planted to grass, as geese feed on grass.
- Mow grassy areas less frequently. Longer grass makes it harder for geese to find the young, tender shoots they prefer.
- Plant a different type of grass. A more coarse grass, such as fescue, is less appealing to geese.
- Avoid creating new water retention basins in developed areas.
- Naturalize existing water retention basins and wetlands. Allow or plant reeds and other tall vegetation to grow along the edges of the water.

Modified agricultural practices

- Plant faster maturing varieties of grain.
- Straight-combine crops, whenever possible, rather than swathing.
- Combine at a slightly higher moisture content and then dry the grain.
- Use a crop rotation that includes less vulnerable crops, such as soybeans or flax.
- Delay fall tillage operations until harvesting in the area is complete. Harvested fields will frequently provide enough grain to attract geese and other waterfowl and keep them away from vulnerable crops.

Hunting (where permitted by regulations and by-laws)

- Hunting is an effective and efficient means to manage goose populations. By allowing hunting, municipalities and landowners can reduce conflicts with geese, and assist in maintaining goose populations at socially acceptable levels that the local habitat is able to support.

For more information on reducing the risk of conflicts with Canada geese and other wildlife, visit www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife.

To report wildlife showing aggressive behaviour or that appears sick, injured, or orphaned, call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.