

# COEXIST WITH Canada Geese



Canada geese (Photo: Mark Buckler)

Canada geese are one of the most recognizable species of waterfowl in North America, known for their large size, black head and neck, and white cheek patch. In North Carolina, they are managed separately as migratory and resident populations. Canada geese are extremely adaptable and thrive in urban and suburban areas.



Canada goose nesting on side of road (Photo: [Wikimedia](#))

## Canada Goose Quick Facts:

### Are Canada geese protected?

Yes, both resident and migratory Canada geese are protected under the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) defines resident Canada geese as those that nest or reside in the lower 48 states through spring and summer (April – August). Canada geese cannot be captured or killed except through regulated hunting or under a federal permit issued by the USFWS.

### Why are there so many geese around my neighborhood?

Canada geese prefer waterbodies that are surrounded by short vegetation. This allows the geese to see predators approaching and provides easy walking access from the water to feeding and resting locations. Additionally, lawn grass is one of their preferred foods. Because of this, mowed areas around ponds and manicured lawns provide ideal habitat for geese.

### Should I feed geese?

No. Even though geese will readily eat handouts from people, their natural diet consists of green vegetation such as lawn grass. Providing foods with little nutritional value like bread and crackers can cause a condition called angel wing, a bone deformity that renders

geese flightless for life. Feeding Canada geese can also congregate geese in small areas and can lead to aggressive behavior. High densities of geese in developed areas often lead to conflicts with people, put geese at risk from motor vehicles, and can spread disease. Once geese have become habituated to an area, it becomes much more difficult to resolve conflicts.

### Is there anyone who can help injured geese?

Licensed waterfowl rehabilitators can provide care for injured or orphaned geese. If the goose is able to evade capture, it is best to leave it alone as continual capture attempts can overstress a bird and cause further damage. For information on wildlife rehabilitators in North Carolina, visit [www.ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem](http://www.ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem).

### I found a goose with a metal leg band, what should I do?

Please report all leg bands to [www.reportband.gov](http://www.reportband.gov). Wildlife biologists across North America band geese as a part of ongoing research and monitoring efforts. In North Carolina, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) bands approximately 2,000 Canada geese in the spring every three years. A number of these geese are harvested during subsequent goose hunting seasons. Returned band data are used by WRC to evaluate population trends and assess the impacts of goose hunting each year.

Wildlife

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, 1751 Varsity Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606  
More information, visit: [ncwildlife.org/canada-goose](http://ncwildlife.org/canada-goose)



Photo: Mark Buckler

# Preventing Conflicts with Geese

## To prevent problems with geese:

- Stop intentional feeding of geese. Clearly post "Do Not Feed the Ducks and Geese" signs. Parks and communities can create and enforce no-feeding ordinances for waterfowl.
- Make water sources less accessible to geese by placing barriers such as 2'-3' tall fencing or dense vegetation around ponds. Canada geese prefer areas with easy walking access between the water and feeding or resting sites.
- Haze the geese by making loud noises and running them off whenever they come into the area. Hazing is an effective and recommended technique as long as the geese are not harmed.
- Reduce the local Canada goose population over time by destroying nests and eggs. Destroying nests and eggs requires a free federal permit, which can be obtained at: <https://epermits.fws.gov/ercgr/>
- Chemical repellants containing methyl anthranilate or anthraquinone can stop geese from damaging vegetation. These

repellants are distasteful to geese though they typically must be reapplied frequently. In some situations, these repellants must be applied by a certified pesticide applicator. For more information on use restrictions, contact the N.C. Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Division at 919-733-3556.



Dense vegetation surrounding a pond will make the pond less accessible and less attractive to geese.

## If you already have a problem with geese:

- Try the non-lethal options described on this page.
- Consider contacting a private company that uses trained dogs and other deterrents to chase the geese off the property.
- Where appropriate, geese can be harvested during the established hunting season with the proper licenses, permits and stamps. Find out more: <http://www.eregulations.com/northcarolina/hunting-fishing/>.
- Between May 1 and Aug. 31, the WRC may issue depredation permits for lethal removal of geese that are causing agricultural damage. Lethal removal under these permits are restricted to the use of shotguns with nontoxic shot.
- Outside of the circumstance described above, lethal take of Canada geese requires a federal permit from the USFWS as

well as a state permit from the WRC. Contact USDA Wildlife Services (866-487-3297) for assistance in acquiring a federal depredation permit. Contact your [local district biologist](#) to attain the required state depredation permit that allows the take of problem geese. Individuals must show non-lethal methods were attempted and unsuccessful before a federal or state depredation permit will be issued.



Photo: Marta Borof