

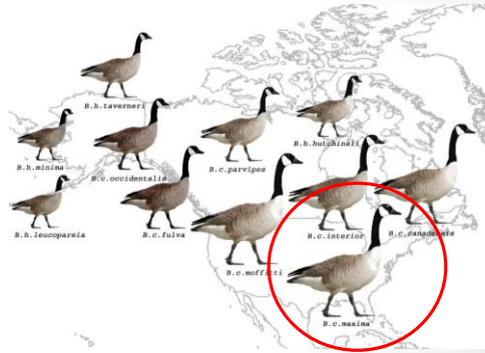


Managing Canada Goose Issues in North Carolina

This document was adapted from a presentation by Falyn Owens, Extension Wildlife Biologist for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and NWCOA-Certified Goose Management Professional at the NC Animal and Rabies Control Association Conference in Oct 2017.

Biology

Non-migratory individuals = **resident geese**



Canada geese are recognizable for their large size, black head and neck, white cheek patch, and greyish body. There are actually multiple subspecies of varying sizes; *Branta canadensis minima* isn't much bigger than a mallard. The giant Canada goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*) was thought at one point to be extinct. It was reintroduced across the U.S. after a small population was discovered in Rochester, Minnesota in 1962. This subspecies has weak migratory instincts, and many live in the same area their entire lives. Canada geese that do not migrate are called **residents**, and are regulated differently than the migratory population.

Who manages Canada Geese?



Canada Geese are classified as migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. As such they are protected by federal law, and managed under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The federal government then works in collaboration with the states to manage hunting seasons so that geese are sustainably harvested. (Photo credit: Southern Virginia Fall Canada Goose Hunt, Thunder Dog Productions, <https://vimeo.com/79932629>).

Have a problem?

Health Concerns



Nuisance Issues



Both?



What about issues that aren't hunting related? Concerns about Canada Geese tend to fall into two main categories. Sometimes the issue is out of concern for the animal's health, sometimes the animals are perceived to be a nuisance. Sometimes it's a little of both. (Photo credits from left and bottom: Falyn Owens, right: break)

Have a problem?



(866) 318-2401

General Information
Permits for Agricultural Damage Only



(866) 4USDA-WS

Jurisdictional Authority
Removal Permits

When it comes to resolving these types of issues, federal and state governments collaborate to provide guidance to the public. The NC Wildlife Resources Commission has been granted the authority to issue removal permits when geese are causing crop damage (May 1 - August 31 each year). Other conflicts are handled through USDA Wildlife Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If you have questions about Canada Goose issues, you may contact either the NC Wildlife Helpline or Wildlife Services directly for more information.

Nuisance Issues

We'll start with nuisance issues.



Often complaints are about there simply being too many geese where people feel they shouldn't be. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



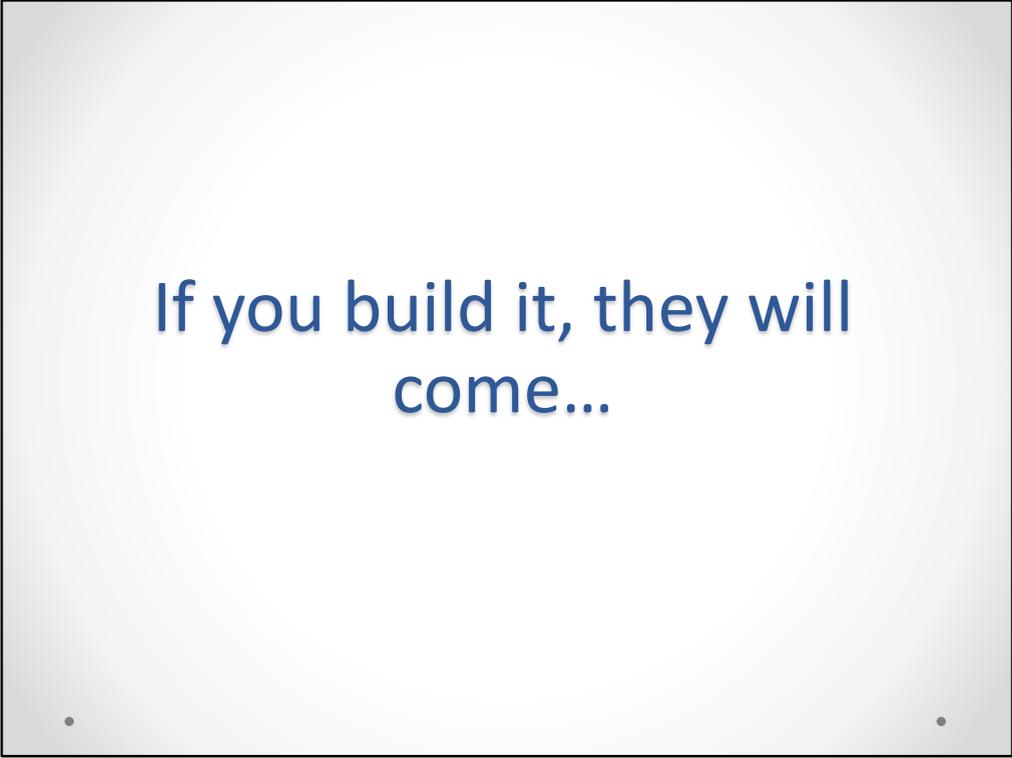
Usually the complaint is about what they leave behind.



Sometimes geese are causing measurable damage to property, such as here where geese have consumed a noticeable swath of soybean seedlings. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



Sometimes the concern is about safety. Nesting geese can be quite territorial. See a video of this pair of nesting geese at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1008776/Canadian-geese-terrorise-University-Warwick-campus.html>. Notice that the gander chases off potential threats while the hen stays on the nest. The gander's intent is to intimidate, not to injure.



If you build it, they will
come...

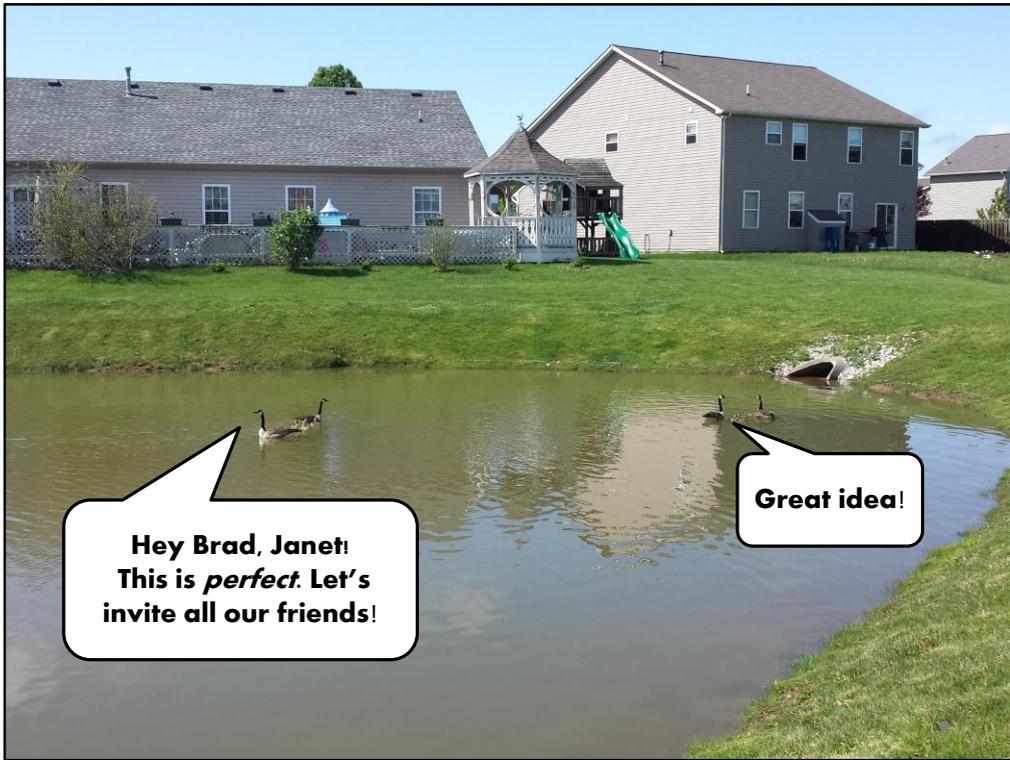
As it turns out, it's often people who have created an environment that entices geese to be a nuisance. Here, it's helpful to understand a little goose psychology....

What attracts geese?

- Open water
- Short vegetation (<6" tall)
- Open sight lines
- Lack of predators
- Walking access to the water
- Tender, growing vegetation, especially grass
- Food handouts

**Mowed ponds and manicured lawn = PERFECT
HABITAT for Canada geese**

These are water birds, and they are vulnerable to predators. To geese, water means safety, so they want it relatively close by. On land, geese are not very agile, so they prefer to be able to see predators from a distance. Geese like short vegetation and open lines of sight. Ideally, geese want to feel that they won't be in *any* danger from predators. They also prefer easy access to food – namely fresh turf grass, or if they're lucky, bread and crackers by well-meaning people.



Park-like conditions can create the perfect environment to attract large numbers of Canada geese. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)

What can be done?

- Hazing – make them feel unsafe

So what can be done? Canada geese are protected by federal law, but this protection only restricts options that harm geese. Hazing is a legal, humane option that doesn't require any permits. Basically, scare them into going somewhere else. Repeated, consistent hazing can cause geese to avoid the area, even if that area is otherwise attractive to them.



Herding dogs are talented goose chasers because their natural instinct is not to touch or injure their quarry, but to frighten them to move on elsewhere. Many goose control professionals employ herding breeds such as Australian shepherds to chase unwelcome geese away from their clients' properties. (Photo credit: Gabi Porter)



Even enthusiastic people can be a great goose deterrent! Remember, the key is to frighten the geese, not to catch them or cause actual harm. (Photo credit: Christopher Evans, the Boston Herald)



Predator decoys can work for a time until geese learn they're not a real threat. Decoys that move in the wind, or are moved to new locations periodically, are usually more effective than stationary ones. This German shepherd silhouette is mounted with a spring, so it will twist in the wind. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



Toys such as remote control boats can be used to chase geese out of the water. A goose that is deprived of its safety zone (the water) and is regularly forced to fly away will likely find somewhere else to spend its time.

The Options

- Hazing – make them feel unsafe
- Prevent easy walking access, especially to and from water

Decouple the food (lawn grass) from the safety net (water). Geese prefer not to fly over short distances and will avoid areas where they are forced to do so. Eliminate easy walking paths to and from their favorite feeding and resting locations with physical barriers.



A simple wire fence can effectively deter geese, no electricity required. It doesn't take much, or need to be expensive. This business in Indianapolis, IN was able to prevent geese from loafing and defecating in their parking lot by installing a fence between their property and a neighboring retention pond. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



Here is an example of a more elaborate goose fence. In this location, the fence was only moderately successful because there were many gaps along the fence that geese could use to travel between the lawn and pond. Fencing/vegetation needs to form a complete barrier around the shoreline to be effective. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



A good goose barrier only needs to be about 2-3' tall. Geese have a hard time seeing over barriers taller than 2 ½ feet, so they they don't have to block views for people. Goose barriers can be quite attractive, as in this photo of a native wildflower planting in a business park in Indianapolis, IN. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



This photo is from the same business park. Attractive vegetation is planted around the entire shoreline. The businesses still get to enjoy a nice, manicured lawn, but the area is unattractive to geese because of the dense, flowering vegetation that separates the lawn from the waterway. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens)



Geese love to nest in mulched areas, which tend to be located right near homes and businesses. A nest next to a walkway or building entrance often means a territorial goose very close to where people walk. Short garden fencing around mulched beds will prevent geese from accessing and nesting in these areas. If permanent fencing isn't an option, a temporary fence can be installed from March through mid-May. Fencing should be at least 1 foot tall and completely surround the desired area.

The Options

- Hazing – make them feel unsafe
- Prevent easy walking access, especially to water
- Prohibit intentional feeding

Feeding geese only entices them to stay in the area and can inflate populations much higher than they would be naturally. If the problem is in a public or shared common area, signs may be needed to inform people not to feed wildlife.



Enforcement of a feeding ban can be difficult, but installing signs as a warning can be an effective deterrent for most people. A sign explaining **why** feeding birds is harmful is especially effective. It may be useful to mention that wild ducks and geese naturally eat green vegetation; they don't need or benefit from human foods, It's fairly unhealthy for them and causes malnutrition and digestive issues. (Photo credit: Susan Mustapich)

The Options

- Hazing – make them feel unsafe
- Prevent easy walking access, especially to water
- Prohibit intentional feeding
- Use chemical repellants

Another option is to use chemical repellants to keep geese from eating lawn or crops.

Chemical Repellents

- **Methyl anthranilate**
 - Grape odor - unpalatable to geese
 - Sold as Liquid Fence, Bird-X
- **Anthraquinone**
 - Invisible to us, visible to geese
 - Causes upset stomach
 - Sold as Flight Control



Repellants can be applied directly to the problem area and do not harm the geese. Disadvantages of chemical repellents include high cost and the need to reapply them frequently. Because of this, repellents are most practical for small areas. Some repellents may be classified as “Restricted Use” and must be applied by a certified pesticide applicator. For more information on restricted pesticides, contact the NC Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Division at 919-733-3556.

Ex: \$265.00 for 1 gallon treats 1 acre (43,560 square feet) of turf. Product typically costs between \$25 and \$30 per 5,000 square feet of coverage, and must be reapplied every few weeks.

The Options

- Hazing – make them feel unsafe
- Prevent easy walking access, especially to water
- Prohibit intentional feeding
- Use chemical repellants
- Reduce the local population

In some situations, lethal means may be a practical, effective option.



Where appropriate, hunting is a highly effective deterrent. Individual geese can be removed, and the flock will learn that the area is not safe. Geese may avoid an area for weeks after a hunter has been present. Check the NC regulations guide (<http://www.eregulations.com/northcarolina/hunting-fishing/>) for current waterfowl hunting regulations. (Photo credit: Canada in the Rough)

Egg and Nest Removal

- Long-term population reduction
- Helps with aggressive nest defense
- If eggs are present, requires a federal permit:

<https://epermits.fws.gov/eRCGR/>

Another way to reduce the local goose population is through egg and nest removal. Preventing geese from reproducing will halt population growth and slowly reduce goose numbers over time. In cases where an aggressive goose defending its nest is the problem, removing the nest can provide an immediate solution. Importantly, goose eggs are protected by federal law, and cannot be removed or destroyed without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These permits are offered free of charge.

Resident Canada Goose Registration
Version P1.6

Welcome to the Resident Canada Goose Nest and Egg Registration Site. If you are a landowner, homeowner's association, public land manager, or local government in the lower 48 states or the District of Columbia, you may register at this site for federal authorization to destroy resident Canada goose nests and eggs on property under your jurisdiction.

You must register each year prior to taking nests and eggs. You must register between January 1 and June 30 of the year in which the nests and egg will be destroyed. You must also enter the individual names of employees or agents who may conduct the work on your behalf. You must be at least 18 years of age to register.

Each registrant must return to this site by October 31 to report the number of nests with eggs which were destroyed, for each month and location county. You must report even if you conducted no activity. You will not be able to register for future seasons if you have an outstanding report after 12/31 of the present year.

Please note that some states do not participate in this registration program or have additional or stricter requirements. It is very important that you review the link of [State Agency Contacts and Information](#) link below to determine whether you should proceed with registration.

[Users Guide](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[Management of Canada Goose Nesting](#)
[Text of Regulation](#)
[State Agency Contacts and Information](#)
[Summary Data](#)

New User [Click here](#) to select applicant type and create a login, password, and account profile.

Existing User Login

Required fields are indicated with a red asterisk *

User Login ID

Password

[Forgot User Login ID or Password?](#)

System Requirements: Pages are best viewed at 640 x 480 resolution with Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher. Cookies and JavaScript must be enabled. To view or print online documents, you will need Adobe Reader.

You can apply for a federal goose egg/nest destruction permit at <https://epermits.fws.gov/eRCGR/>. Permits must be acquired every year, and are valid from January 1 through June 30. Reporting of all egg and nest removal activities is required at the end of the permit period. Failure to submit a report can prevent you from getting a permit in subsequent years!



If any eggs are present, a permit is required. If no eggs are present, a nest can be removed at any time - no permit required. (Photo credit: nottsexaminer CC BY-SA 2.0)

Health Concerns

- Concerns about risk to geese – deter them from area

Previously mentioned techniques can be applied if geese are perceived to be 'in danger' – from vehicles, angry neighbors, etc. Wild geese cannot be relocated in North Carolina. Relocation is expensive, stressful to the birds, and ineffective since they can fly back to the original location immediately after release. Importantly, relocating geese does not solve the underlying cause which attracted geese to the area in the first place.



This condition, called “angel wings,” is caused by nutrient deficiency from eating too little natural vegetation and too much human-supplied food as the bird’s bones were growing. This bird is permanently disfigured for life because it was regularly fed bread and other ‘junk food’ by well-meaning people. Bread products are like candy to geese, which will readily consume them when offered. However, these foods provide little nutritional value. A goose’s natural diet consists mostly of green vegetation, such as grasses and forbs – they do not need additional food from people.

Health Concerns

- Concerns about risk – deter geese from area
- Injured geese – a licensed rehabilitator may be able to help

Licensed Waterfowl Rehabilitators

www.ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem

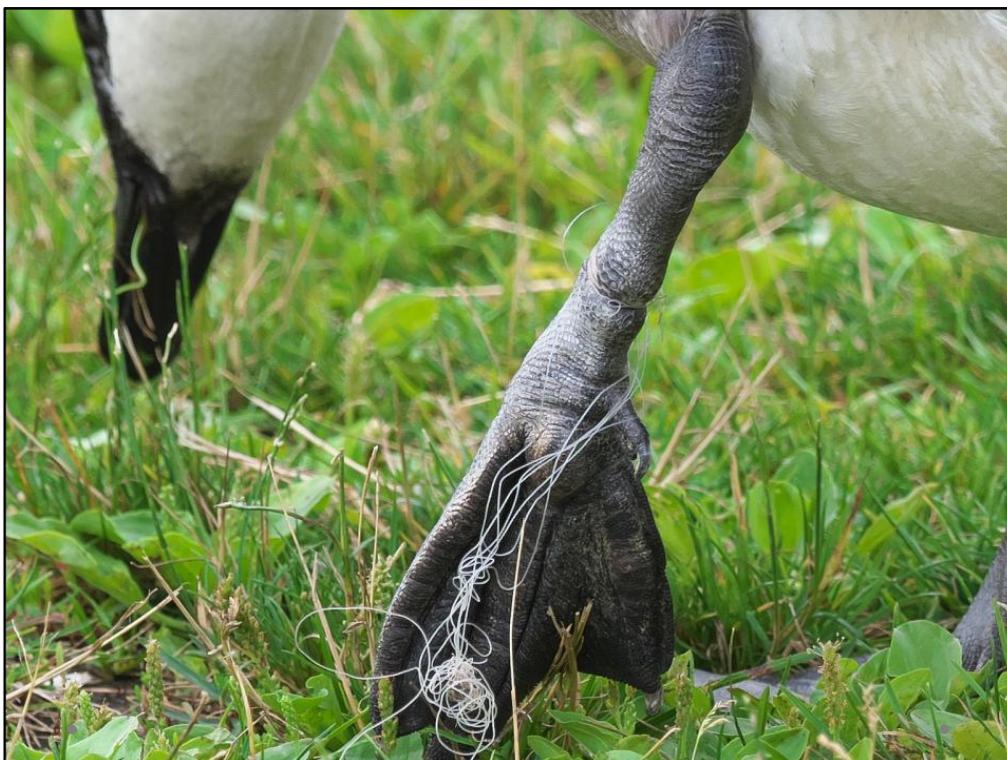


Locations of federally licensed waterfowl rehabilitators as of January 30, 2019. There are not many across the state. Wildlife rehabilitation is difficult work, and is financially supported through donations only. This map is subject to change as rehabilitators are removed and added each year. Find contact information for current rehabilitators at www.ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem.

Health Concerns

- Concerns about risk – deter geese from area
- Injured geese – licensed rehabilitator may be able to help
- If the bird can evade capture, best to leave it alone

When determining if a wild animal needs human help, a good rule of thumb is: if the animal can easily evade capture, you're probably going to do more harm than good trying to capture it. Chasing an injured wild animal causes it unnecessary stress, and can injure it further. Keep in mind, if it can easily evade humans, it can probably also evade predators. Old, healed injuries show that an animal has been able to survive without human intervention for some time, and assistance is likely not necessary. Rehabilitators can help a bird recover from fresh injuries, but they cannot heal old wounds, and will not take in animals that have already learned to survive with old injuries.



Geese often get tangled in old fishing line. If a tangled goose can be captured quickly and safely, any person may cut off the line and *immediately* set the bird free. If the bird has fresh injuries, contact a licensed waterfowl rehabilitator. (Photo credit: Gavin Edmondstone)

Please Report Bands



**North American Bird
Banding Laboratory**

www.reportband.gov



Bands are placed on a variety of bird species as part of research and monitoring efforts. Anyone who finds a bird band should report it, citizen reports are an essential part of these research efforts. The data help U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) researchers to determine an individual bird's lifespan and migratory patterns as well as reproductive success and population changes in the species. (Photo credit: deltawaterfowl.org)



Canada Geese are hearty, adaptable animals, and are worthy of respect. With a little work to understand them, people and geese can successfully coexist. (Photo credit: Falyn Owens, a pair of nesting Canada geese in Indianapolis, IN - the hen built her nest on an old bridge support to prevent any access by predators. The gander vigilantly guards his mate and eggs.)