

PLEASE... DO NOT FEED WATERFOWL

A big part of why we have so many non-migratory geese comes back to...us. A change in some of our habits can significantly change the allure that certain areas have for large flocks of geese.

STOP FEEDING WILDLIFE

Allow our majestic wild birds to stay wild by not feeding them!

You can help waterfowl by NOT feeding them! As the CT DEP has noted, "Feeding creates multiple problems, not only for people, but also



for the birds. Well-intentioned people erroneously believe that feeding is beneficial to waterfowl, but it often has negative ecological, environmental, and social consequences."

Feeding waterfowl fills them up on 'people food' and deprives them of the nutrients they need to be healthy. Bread, crackers and cracked corn do not provide the nutrition that the geese require to thrive and survive. Malnutrition makes geese more susceptible to disease, at risk of development of deformed wings, and lowers their vitality and life expectancy. Feeding encourages flocks to congregate in concentrated areas, which exposes waterfowl to an even greater risk of disease.

Watershed Resident



It's our watershed — let's take care of it!

Representing the municipalities of New Canaan,
Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield,
Weston, and Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY



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**NON MIGRANTS TO
ENVIRONMENTAL
POPULATIONS**

CANADA GEESE

"RESIDENT" GEESE VS. "MIGRANT" GEESE

Canada geese are migratory waterfowl. Like ducks and other waterfowl, Canada geese migrate seasonally. For many people, a classic symbol of autumn is watching the 'V'-shaped flocks of migrant geese flying south for the winter. "Migrant" populations nest in northern Canada and then winter in the southern U.S. Canada geese have a strong instinct for returning to nest in close vicinity of their birthplace.

"Resident" (non-migratory) geese that breed in Connecticut are distinct from the migratory populations that breed in the north. Year-round 'resident' populations have become well established in Connecticut since the 1950's and now nest throughout the state and the U.S.

The resident Canada goose has proven to be very capable at adapting to our landscaping practices, which have delivered a desirable combination of water, grazing areas and cover. This once small population of "resident" geese has so dramatically grown in numbers that the non-migratory Canada goose is now seen by many as a nuisance. Their concentrated flocks have resulted in widespread nuisance problems and occasionally result in environmental and public health problems.

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY CANADA GEESE AROUND HERE?

According to the CT DEP, "Canada goose numbers have steadily increased from average midwinter counts of 138 in the 1950s to 5,000 in the 1990s." The current Connecticut population is estimated at approximately 40,000 and growing. In addition to supportive habitat resources, the DEP and other experts cite a combination of a high survival rate (due to the lack of traditional predators) and moderate

reproductive rate (the average pair successfully raises 4 goslings per year) that have permitted the population to blossom.

IMPACTS & NUISANCE PROBLEMS

Non-migratory Canada geese themselves are not inherently bad or undesirable in the urban/suburban landscape. The presence of these majestic birds in our suburban and urban areas, with the associated public experience and enjoyment of watching geese waddle and swim, provides a benefit.

However, the negative impacts of concentrated, large geese flocks have been well documented in scientific literature.



Large flocks leave behind a significant amount of fecal material, especially if the geese use a site on a consistent basis. In 2009, you would be hard-pressed to find a resident of lower Fairfield County that has not carefully tip-toed across a beach, ball field, golf course, or lawn to avoid stepping on goose waste.

Concentrated populations of geese litter their grazing areas with their droppings. The droppings, in addition to being unsightly, leave behind elevated levels of bacteria and pathogens.

Unfortunately, many of our waterbodies (from small ponds in northern Ridgefield to our beaches along Long Island Sound) already struggle with excessive amounts of bacteria and nitrogen.

The Norwalk River, for example, experiences documented excessive levels of indicator

When nutrients or bacteria occur at levels higher than natural levels, the introduced excesses are ***pollution.***

bacteria. The amount of bacteria in the Norwalk River often exceeds the water quality standards set by our state and federal governments. Potential sources of the high bacteria levels have been identified and fecal matter associated with large flocks of waterfowl are one of the likely sources of this pollution.

Goose population overabundance increases the risk of human health problems. Research has proven that large flocks are directly associated with incidences of increased fecal coliform levels and

presence of other pathogens including *Giardia lamblia*, *Salmonella* spp. and other disease-causing organisms. These circumstances cause some of our favorite recreational areas to become unusable for animals and humans.

Lastly, large numbers of Canada geese in relatively confined areas can be a threat to health of other waterfowl and wildlife by exacerbating outbreaks of avian disease.

