
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Canada Geese Facts and Management Options

Canada Geese are a common sight around lakes, ponds, and even golf courses. These birds often migrate in the fall, but isolated populations may reside year around. Nesting begins in March and April, usually along a waterbody's riparian zone. Geese can lay approximately three to six eggs in a clutch, and often abandon the nest within one or two days. The geese can live upwards of 24 years and can weigh approximately 12 pounds.



How much nutrient loading do Canada Geese add to a lake?

One goose can consume up to four pounds of grass per day, creating about three pounds of fecal matter daily. In large concentrations, this matter can contribute to excessive nutrient loading because fecal matter contains 76 percent carbon, 4.4 percent nitrogen, and 1.3 percent phosphorus. These nutrients can cause algal blooms and excessive plant growth in lakes.

How can Canada Geese affect human health?

When geese defecate near shore or in the water, they create a health risk to humans. Their fecal material may contain the swimmer's itch organism along with fecal bacteria. Swimmer's itch is a temporary skin rash caused by a small parasite; however, the rash does not require treatment. A larger concern are fecal bacteria, or *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which are naturally occurring bacteria in the digestive tracts of warm-blooded animals. *E. coli*, when present in large amounts, may cause gastrointestinal problems such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The presence of *E. coli* may also indicate the potential presence of other pathogenic organisms. *You should avoid contact and ingestion of water in areas frequented by geese.*

How do I make my property less inviting to Canada Geese?

You can employ some lake protection tips such as leaving a buffered zone near the lake comprised of bushes, shrubs and vegetation. Grass is very attractive and geese tend to flock to it. If you already have a grassy shoreline or lawn it is best to keep the grass high (6".) Remove accumulated nesting materials (sticks and shrubbery) prior to geese nesting, or remove the nest after geese have hatched and moved on (roughly two to three days after hatching.) Remember however, before you tamper with the nests of Canada Geese a permit is required from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

How else can I manage Canada Geese on my property?



Create barriers between the grass and the water. The barrier can be as simple as a piece of string that they cannot step over or walk under.



Install an overhead grid wire to prevent the geese from landing and nesting in that area.



Obstruct the view of the surrounding area. Geese need to identify if predators are approaching.



Use noise harassment. If the geese land on the lake/property every morning, greet them with a loud noise. There are several different tools you can use to create the noise harassment such as propane canons, starter pistols, air horns, and recorded predator noises. Please warn your neighbors before employing these methods!



Dogs may also deter geese from landing or roosting on your property. A barking dog guarding the property may be effective.



For the best results, employ two or more of the management strategies.

For more information on Canada Geese Management, visit the following websites:

- [Purdue University's Urban Canada Goose Management](#)
- [Humane Society of the United States: What to do about Canada geese](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: FAQs About Migratory Birds](#)
- [Indiana Department of Natural Resources: Canada Goose Management](#)

For more information on swimmer's itch, refer to Fact Sheet WD-BB-2 [Swimmer's Itch](#).

For more information on bacteria, refer to Fact Sheet WD-BB-14 [Bacteria in Surface Waters](#).