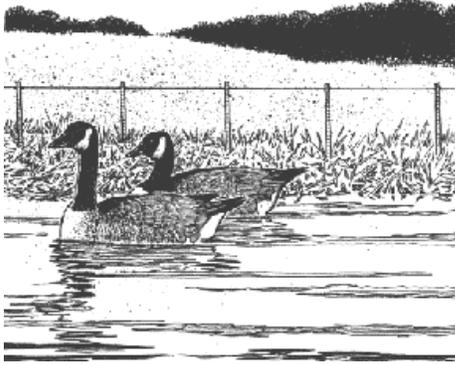


NUISANCE CANADA GOOSE CONTROL

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Illustrated by David Williams

Three distinct populations of Canada geese can be found in North Carolina at various times of the year. Two groups are migratory and are found in North Carolina only during the fall and winter. The Atlantic population breeds in Northern Quebec and winters in the northeastern part of the state.



The Southern James Bay population breeds in Ontario and can be found widely scattered in the upper coastal plain, piedmont, and foothills. Both migratory populations are declining in number. Conversely, our resident population is increasing and stays in North Carolina year round. Resident geese are found throughout the state with the largest numbers occurring in the piedmont and northeastern part of the state.

These resident Canada geese mean many things to many different people. Observing the graceful flight of a flock of geese swinging into a farm pond or neighborhood lake, watching a pair successfully nest and raise a brood of goslings, or simply listening to the

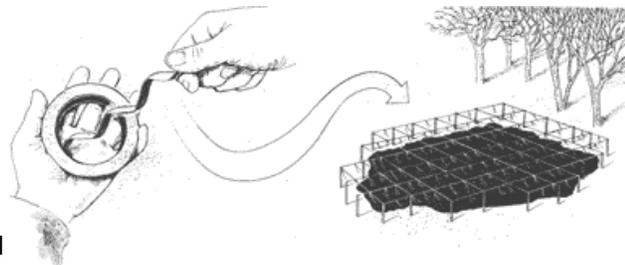
unmistakable call of the Canada goose delights many people. The temperament and visibility of resident Canada geese afford people a close look at one of nature's creatures.

Resident Canada geese also create problems for many people. As both human and resident Canada goose populations have increased in North Carolina, conflicts have occurred. Most people can tolerate and in fact enjoy a few Canada geese; however, as numbers increase problems are usually not far behind. Congregations of Canada geese can cause problems by overgrazing lawns and golf courses while leaving large accumulations of feathers and droppings. Health concerns are realistic when large numbers of geese congregate at water treatment facilities and swimming areas. Resident Canada geese may also cause destruction of vegetable gardens or commercially grown agricultural crops such as corn, peanuts, and soybeans.

Like all native waterfowl and other migratory birds, Canada geese are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and various state and federal laws. In accordance with these laws it is unlawful to hunt, kill, sell, purchase, or possess migratory birds, except as permitted by regulations adopted on an annual basis by the Secretary of the Interior. Harassment of geese to disperse them at problem areas is permissible. Currently there are closed hunting seasons in North Carolina for both migratory populations. Resident Canada geese can be hunted throughout much of the state during a special season in September, before migratory birds arrive.

General Considerations for Resident Goose Control

The loss of wariness of resident Canada geese to people often makes goose control very difficult. While there are a variety of techniques used to disperse geese from problem areas, each is met with varying degrees of success. Of the various methods described herein, keep in mind that some techniques will work for some groups of geese and have no effect on others. General guidelines include:



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1. Discontinue feeding or any other unnecessary activity that may be attracting geese. Don't give geese a reason to be there. Feeding concentrates birds, conditions birds to be less wary of humans, and renders most dispersal techniques ineffective. Canada geese are very capable of finding their own forage, making well intentioned hand-outs unnecessary.
2. Try different dispersal methods, perhaps 2 or 3 at the same time.
3. Be persistent. It may take a while. Initial efforts need to be continuous and may require a round-the-clock commitment. Ineffective harassment may be counter productive by training the birds to be non-responsive.
4. It is more effective and easier to disperse birds from an area when they first arrive. Dispersal efforts should be diligent just before the nesting season (February-March). Dispersal during the nesting, brood rearing, and adult flightless stages (May-July) will be very difficult. Don't let the situation become a problem.
5. If birds return to an area after being successfully dispersed, meet them with a hostile reception. Returning birds should be easier to disperse the 2nd and following occasions.
6. Be aware that domestic ducks and geese will attract resident flocks of Canada geese to an area.

Remember that some people may not see your situation as a problem and will not understand why you are harassing "their" geese. It is best to keep neighbors informed of your plans.

GOOSE DISPERSAL TECHNIQUES

Habitat Modification

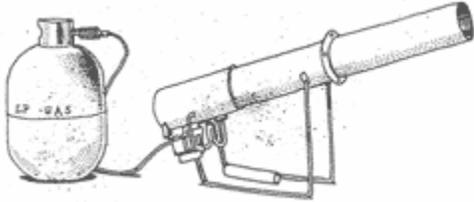
In many instances, geese tend to walk, not fly, to and from water to feed. If overgrazing or fecal accumulation is occurring on lawns or gardens adjacent to a pond or lake, installing a low fence or other barrier may prevent geese from accessing the problem area. This type of barrier may consist of a single strand of 16 gauge galvanized wire, rot-resistant twine, chicken wire, closely planted shrubs, or even a rock wall. The single strand of wire or twine should be about 8 inches high while other barriers should be at least 2 feet high. Electric fencing can also be very effective. Barriers should be placed directly adjacent to the water's edge. If you own the pond, you may consider allowing vegetation to "grow-up" around the edge. Geese prefer ponds that are "open" and have low growing vegetation around the sides.

Curtailing the mowing of vegetation may diminish the attractiveness of the pond by not affording the geese security of an "open" pond and also by not encouraging new plant growth to which geese are attracted. Taking down goose nesting platforms or modifying existing small islands or peninsulas in ponds will also make areas less attractive for nesting geese.

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Mylar Tape

The shimmering effect of two-sided reflective mylar tape has been used to frighten and disperse Canada geese as well as other nuisance birds. To control Canada geese, construct a mylar tape fence 8 to 10 inches from the waters edge, parallel to the area where geese are leaving the water. The tape should be tied to a stake approximately 10 inches off the ground and then unrolled and supported by other stakes every 20 to 25 feet. Leave some slack and put several twists in the tape between successive stakes. This will increase the shimmering affect and movement when the wind is blowing. Mylar tape is most effective when used in conjunction with other scare tactics such as scare pistols. Mylar tape may be found in lawn and garden stores and may be known also as bird scare tape or ribbon.



Overhead Lines

Overhead lines crisscrossed over a small pond have been successfully used as a long term solution in keeping geese away from water and surrounding areas. These lines interfere with geese attempting to land and take off from the water, and the geese

frequently abandon such areas in a relatively short time. The lines should crisscross the pond at an approximate 20 foot spacing and be elevated about 3-6 feet above the water. If this spacing proves ineffective, a 10 foot grid may be necessary. Attaching mylar tape on the lines increases effectiveness. Contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture - ADC Wildlife Services (USDA-ADC) for detailed information.

Exploding Devices

In some areas, exploding devices are the most recommended and most successful of the scare devices. There are a variety of exploding devices available including scare pistols, automatically



firing propane cannons, and exploding shells for 12 gauge shotguns. The various exploding devices are most effective when they are fired so they will go off under the birds just as they are about to land. Automatic cannons provide an extremely loud noise and are most appropriate in rural areas and large agricultural fields where the noise is not likely to bother neighbors. When using any of these devices, please inform local police, wildlife enforcement officers and neighbors as to your actions. Also check local ordinances to see if these devices can be used in your area and/or if any special permits are needed. Some of these devices can be dangerous when used improperly. Follow instructions and consider use of eye and ear protection when using scare pistols and cannons.

Hunting

When damage is occurring outside of city limits or other "sanctuaries", legal hunting may be a very successful means of alleviating goose damage. In rural areas where geese are a problem, adjacent landowners may consider joining together to allow hunting on a series of farms, lakes, or ponds. Because seasons last only a few weeks, hunting in itself is usually not enough to disperse birds for a long period of time; however, successive years of high hunting pressure may keep the population in check or perhaps reduce populations and thereby make future goose damage more tolerable. Hunting for resident geese is allowed throughout much of North Carolina during a September season; however, you should check regulations each year to determine exact season dates, bag limits and other regulations for your location. A Federal migratory bird stamp, appropriate state stamps and licenses and steel shot are required to hunt Canada geese.

Chemical Repellents

Various goose "repellents" currently on the market have largely been proven ineffective.

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However, a new product, ReJeX-iT™ has a strong grape odor and shows promise in repelling geese. Contact USDA-ADC for more current information.

Egg Destruction

Egg addling or egg shaking may be used to help lower goose reproduction in problem areas where hunting is not an option. When addling eggs, visit all known goose nests and shake eggs vigorously, thereby making embryos unviable. Return eggs to nest, taking care not to destroy eggs. Geese should return and continue laying or incubating, not knowing that eggs are unviable. Geese will eventually abandon nests, but probably will not renest for the year. Spraying eggs with mineral oil will block oxygen transfer and will provide the same effect as egg shaking. Keep in mind that egg destruction is frowned upon by a large group of people. Keep neighbors apprised of your plans or at least consider how they may feel about this technique. A permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is required for egg addling and spraying. Contact the USDA-ADC for information on obtaining permits or other questions regarding egg addling.

Relocation

The NCWRC does not trap and relocate nuisance Canada geese. Previous results in other states indicate that many times geese return even after being transported several hundred miles. In the past, USDA-ADC has trapped and relocated nuisance Canada geese to other states on a very limited basis and generally only after other goose dispersal techniques have failed. Selected sites are based primarily on whether geese pose a human safety or health concern. Contact USDA-ADC to see if any relocation programs are currently active.

References and Sources

Sources for automatic propane exploders, scare pistols, exploding shotgun shells and mylar tape:

Reed-Joseph International Co.
P.O. Box 894 - 230 Main Street
Greenville, MS 38701
1-800-647-5554

Sutton Ag Enterprises, Inc.
746 Vertin Avenue
Salinas, CA 93901
408/422-9693

Many local suppliers of bottled gas have propane exploders in stock or are able to order for you

Note: This list of companies is not necessarily complete nor an endorsement by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission or the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For further assistance, contact:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
ADC Wildlife Services
6213-E Angus Drive
Raleigh, NC 27613
919/786-4480

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
Wildlife Management Division
1751 Varsity Drive

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