

Let's Talk about Canadian Geese



If you live on or near Buckeye Lake you see and hear the geese every day. They have become a problem due to the size of the population. We estimate there are at least 500 in the Buckeye Lake water shed at any given time and this is not counting the migrating population. Why is this an issue? This species of Canadian goose, the maxima or giant Canadian, goose can consume 4 pounds of food and produce up to 3 pounds of waste a day ¹. Unfortunately, these geese do not migrate, so do the math, 500 geese times 3 pounds of waste a day, times 365 days, or over **250 tons** of waste a year. It should also be noted that during migration season the count is much larger. The Audubon Society Christmas count for the Buckeye Lake region was December 15, 2012 and the count was

¹ New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Fact Sheet BB53 2012

1080 Canadian geese.² Beside the waste along our shore lines, beaches and parks, the pollution to our water is the main concern. The e-coli found in Buckeye Lake is avian in nature, same as found in the geese waste, and typically the e-coli can be found in up to 90% of waste samples in warmer months like July.



Large accumulations of feces near water can degrade water quality as rains wash the material into the water. Goose feces are high in phosphorus and nitrogen, nutrients that in excess can cause nuisance blooms of algae and aquatic plants in ponds and lakes. An excess of algae and submerged plants can lead to oxygen depletion at night due to plant respiration, and can cause a fish kill.³

In addition, goose feces can contain a variety of pathogens such as *Giardia* and *Coliform* bacteria, which can cause illness in humans. Large numbers of geese can elevate concentrations of these pathogens in pond and lake water, and accidental ingestion of such water can cause illness.⁴

The “nuisance geese” are the ones who do not migrate and stay in our watershed all year round. They have descended from eggs brought down from Minnesota to start the local populations. The problem is that our lakes are not surrounded by 90% wilderness nor do we have all the natural predators to control the population like their habitat in Canada and Minnesota.

The State of Ohio department of Wildlife claims there were only 60 breeding pairs in the Buckeye Lake Watershed this year and that on average they will only produce 5 geese due to egg addling on Public lands. We feel this number is very low based on what hunters, farmers, and our own observations in the area tell us. For instance, there were 23

² <http://buckeyelakebirds.info/ohbl-2012-2013/>

³ <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/W-3> and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Fact Sheet BB53 2012

⁴ <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/W-3>

nests just in Maple Bay before the water raised last month flooding out a majority of them in the middle of the bay.

What can you do to help?

Canada geese are probably the most adaptable and tolerant of all native waterfowl. If left undisturbed, they will readily establish nesting territories on any suitable pond, be it located on a farm, backyard, golf course, apartment or condominium complex, or city park. Most people will welcome and start feeding the first pair of geese on their pond, but these geese will soon wear out their welcome. In just a few years, a pair of geese can easily become 50 to 100 birds. The feces will foul the areas around the lake and surrounding yards and also damage the lawn, pond, and other vegetation. Geese that are fed will lose their fear of humans and attack adults, children, and pets during the nesting season (March through June). Typically, during nesting months Ohio Wildlife (<http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov>) has a link on their website to report nuisance geese. You can help by using this site during nesting to report problem geese, per Ohio Wildlife there were zero reports from Buckeye lake in 2016.

DO NOT FEED GEESE. Feeding bread, corn, potato chips, popcorn, and other human food items harms the geese and sets the scene for goose attacks on people.⁵

Canada geese are protected under both the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Ohio state law. This protection extends to the geese, goslings, nests, and eggs. Non-lethal scare and hazing tactics, which do not harm the geese, are allowed. These tactics include: pyrotechnics, dogs, barriers, a grid on the pond, laser pointers (at night), distress calls, or grape-flavored repellants such as Flight

Control. If non-lethal tactics have been used in the past, without success, the Division of wildlife may issue an egg addling (shaking) permit. We checked there was a permit to addle eggs in Buckeye Lake region. Hunting in the fall, outside city limits, is a good method to reduce the goose population, feed people, and further scare the geese away.⁶

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

Contact your district wildlife office for a listing of nuisance wildlife trappers in your area or for additional information on wildlife control. You can also check in the yellow pages under pest control to find private companies who may help. DISTRICT ONE:614 / 644-3925, 1500 Dublin Rd., Columbus 43215.⁷

⁵ <http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/Portals/wildlife/pdfs/publications/information/pub083.pdf>

⁶ <http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/Portals/wildlife/pdfs/publications/information/pub083.pdf>

⁷ <http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/Portals/wildlife/pdfs/publications/information/pub083.pdf>

Local efforts we are aware of include several home owner associations in the watershed that have hired professionals to addle eggs and keep the geese out of their neighborhoods. There is also work being done to get a grant to pay for a round up in the Buckeye Lake Watershed, if we are able to get the grant we will be looking for private property around the lake where we can hold round ups to remove nuisance geese during the molting season similar to what was done in Columbus this year. Our current plan would include harvesting the breasts from the geese for local food banks.