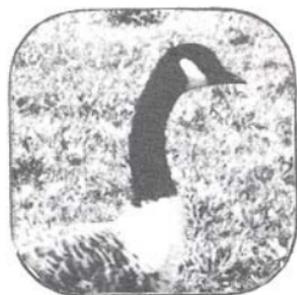


MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD'S



ECO-TIPS: Problem Geese

INTRODUCTION

Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) are a beautiful reminder of the change of the seasons. Their fall migrations signal the end of summer, while their flight overhead in March hints at the arrival of warmer weather. Migrating geese rarely overwhelm an area: They move on before all resources are gone. Large non-migrating populations, however, can be disastrous to the small areas they inhabit. This brochure will describe several things that you can do to manage non-migrating "problem geese".

PROBLEM GEESE

The non-migrating or "resident" population does not spend summer in the Tundra, like migrant geese. They live, instead, on ball fields, large lawns, and golf courses. They find water in the detention basins and landscaped ponds of recreational or residential areas. They have no natural predators, ample food supplies, and laws which protect them from harm. They have no need to migrate.

Resident geese have small habitats, and as the population grows, they can become aggressive toward people, domestic pets, and native waterfowl. Large populations cause property damage and can pose health risks from salmonella or other bacteria. Studies indicate that a goose creates about 1,250 pounds of fecal matter per year. The effect of such high levels of nutrients on our lakes and ponds can be devastating.



Large populations of non-migrating resident geese can be ecologically damaging to lakes and ponds. Belmar discourages feeding at Silver Lake through the posting of informational signs.

GEESE ARE PROTECTED

Federal laws intended to protect migrating waterfowl also protect resident geese. It is very difficult to tell resident geese from migrating geese during the migration period, as they are essentially identical in appearance. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has the unique challenge of protecting migrating geese while addressing the problems created by a resident population. They work with state and local authorities on nuisance issues and regulate sport hunting, capture and removal of resident geese, after other alternatives are exhausted.

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLANS

Before addressing the issues of a resident goose population in your community, you should prepare an integrated plan for their management. A comprehensive plan includes the following steps: Preventative Measures, where the geese are not already a significant problem; Habitat Management; Harassment Alternatives; and finally,

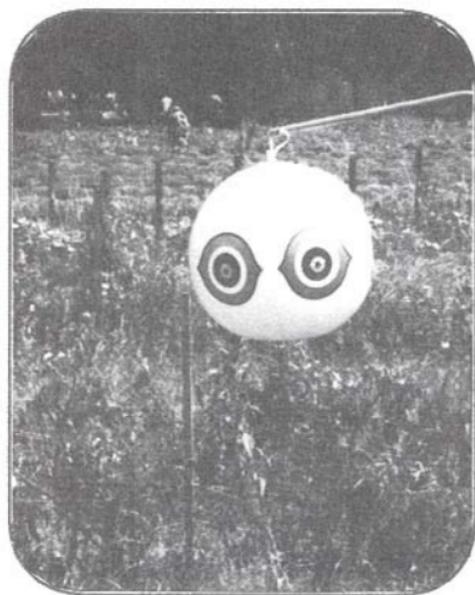
Population Control Measures. It is most constructive to start before the geese become a "problem".

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

If the population of resident geese is not yet a significant issue in your community, there are several options you can try to make your site less attractive to geese. If you have a lake or pond, or large grassy areas where geese might congregate, you should prohibit feeding. Feeding waterfowl makes them more dependant on humans and less likely to migrate. Eating foods which are not naturally a part of their diet, like white bread, can affect their overall health; and resulting high nutrient levels can cause an algae bloom in your lake.

To reduce the appeal of your site, you can install inexpensive "scarecrows". Scarecrows must be visible to geese in flight and should be moved periodically to keep up the charade. "Eyespot balloons" make effective scarecrows. These inflatable, vinyl globes are decorated with circles, to resemble large eyes. Helium filled, or hung from poles, they move in the breeze and appear like the

"eyes" of predators. Shiny mylar ribbon or garbage bags, stapled to a stake at an angle, may also be useful against geese in flight.

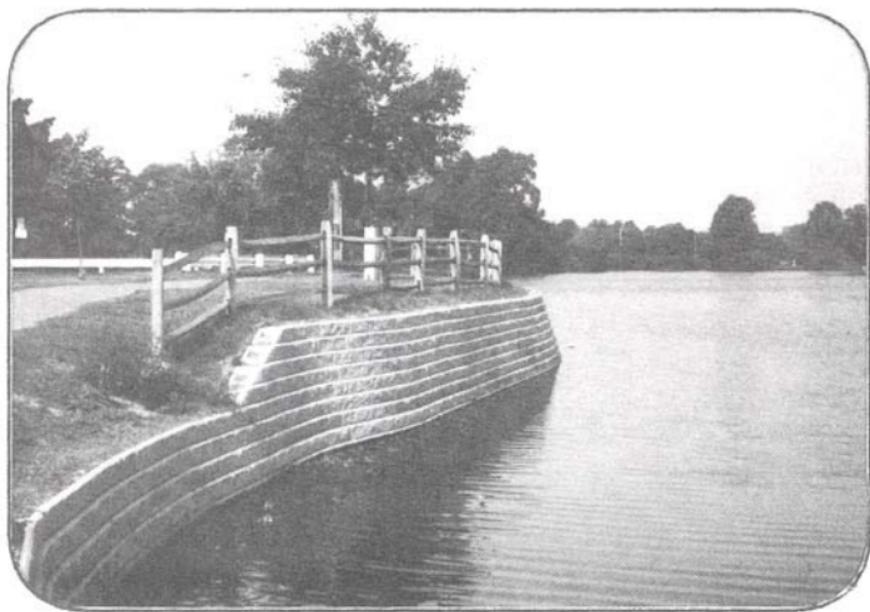


A farmer in Howell Township uses the eyespot balloons to keep problem geese out of the crops.

Flying geese need long grassy strips or open water to land. They also need clear, gently sloping access between grass and water, for flightless periods. Managing your site, by reducing attractive habitat can prevent new populations from settling in.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Molting geese and goslings cannot fly. Therefore, they will be less likely to inhabit a site that has barriers at the water's edge. Fencing, woody shrubs, or tall, thick grasses can provide suitable barriers when they are at least 2.5 feet in height. Do not mow the edges of ponds, especially when geese are starting to nest. Reducing lawn areas, or breaking up these large "landing zones" with clusters of trees and shrubs, can also be productive.



West Long Branch has installed attractive barriers as part of their integrated management plan for Franklin Lake.

Some plants are not palatable to geese. Plant Tall Fescue, an unfavorable grass, or mix grasses with periwinkle, ivy, myrtle or pachysandra. This will reduce the appeal of the feeding ground. Applying environmentally safe repellents may also help. One is made from the same chemicals found in artificial grape flavoring (*methyl anthranilate*). Repellents, however, need to be reapplied after each rainfall and this can become a costly process.

HARASSMENT ALTERNATIVES

Dog patrols, aggressive behavior and loud noises can turn geese away. No Federal or State Permits are required to

harass geese as long as the birds are not touched, injured or killed. Harassment should be carefully planned with advice from the regulatory agencies. Properly trained dog patrols use herding techniques and eye contact to influence geese. Geese recognize the wolf-like breeds typically used, as potential predators. Aggressive human behavior, such as repeated chasing from the site by an adult armed with a broom, may prevent geese from choosing to nest on your site. Loud noises can also be effective. Pyrotechnics, discharged from a small canon or shotgun, are useful, but can be dangerous. They are not recommended for highly populated areas. Your community may have ordinances which would prohibit their use.

POPULATION CONTROLS

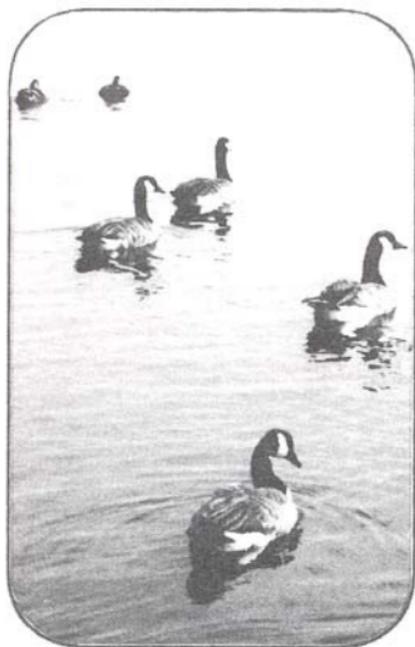
Once a resident population has become entrenched, harassment may not be enough. Hunting, reproductive control and depredation are three population control methods for removal. All three of these measures are regulated by federal and state agencies. Hunting requires a valid state license and both state and federal waterfowl stamps. Two special seasons typically occur in New Jersey: An early season in September and a late Winter-Spring season. The early season is open throughout the state, wherever hunting is typically permitted and safe. The late season is restricted to distinct zones. The New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife publishes specific hunting information in the Fish and Wildlife Digest.

Reproductive control requires a permit and consists of treating nests or eggs to prevent hatching. It is more effective to leave the nest or eggs in place after treatment, as geese will rebuild and lay new eggs if removed. Depredation can only be done when a Federal/State permit is issued. Population control techniques should only be done when all other measures have failed and there is some risk to human health or safety, or when property damage is severe.

An integrated management plan can be a valuable tool for establishing which procedures your community will use

and the timing of various techniques. This plan will also be helpful in securing state or federal permits, if depredation or reproductive control become necessary.

To avoid such measures, find a balance early on between the resident goose population and the resident human population. Then, they may not become "problem geese."



FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL:

Monmouth Co. Planning Board
Environmental Planning Section
at (732) 431-7460

US Dept. of Agriculture
Wildlife Services Program
at (908) 735-5654

OR WRITE:

Monmouth Co. Planning Board
Hall of Records Annex
One East Main Street
Freehold, N.J. 07728

For hunting information, call:
NJ Bur. of Wildlife Management
at (609) 292-6685

To report banded birds, call:
NJ Div. of Fish, Game & Wildlife
at 1(800) 327 - BAND

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