

# ...by NOT feeding them

Parks, lakes, reservoirs, and other recreational areas provide great opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities and view wildlife. Traditionally, a favorite pastime for many people has been to feed waterfowl. However, feeding waterfowl may cause water pollution, nutritional deficiencies, disease, overpopulation, and habitat degradation.



Nationwide, resident (non-migratory) populations of waterfowl are increasing. High numbers of waterfowl coupled with human feeding often results in negative interactions between waterfowl and humans.

## 5 Reasons not to feed waterfowl!

- ▶ Water pollution
- ▶ Nutritional deficiencies
- ▶ Disease
- ▶ Overpopulation
- ▶ Habitat degradation

### WATER POLLUTION

High concentration of waterfowl results in more fecal material present in and around water sources. Large concentrations of waterfowl feces lead to poor water quality by reducing oxygen, which negatively impacts human and aquatic life.

✓ **Humans depend on lakes for drinking water and recreation.**



### NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCIES

Typically, waterfowl eat roots, shoots, stems, seeds, grain, berries, leaves, insects, and aquatic invertebrates. While people may enjoy feeding waterfowl, it is actually harmful to their health. Common handouts such as bread, crackers, and popcorn do not contain the proper nutrients required by waterfowl and can result in bone deformities, a reduced ability to fly, muscle deterioration, and a lowered life expectancy. When waterfowl are fed, they abandon their search for natural and nutritious foods.

✓ **Waterfowl do not need food from humans to survive.**

### DISEASE

When waterfowl are given food handouts, they begin to concentrate and overpopulate. Higher concentrations of waterfowl and lower nutritional value of food increases the likelihood of disease. Waterfowl are most likely to spread diseases through the deposition of fecal material. Bird to bird diseases have resulted in large die-offs of waterfowl. Also, bacteria such as *E. coli* may be spread from waterfowl to humans. Children and recreationalists are at risk of contracting an illness as a result of contact with waterfowl feces.

✓ **High concentrations of waterfowl increase the chances for disease transmission.**

## OVERPOPULATION

Hand-feeding waterfowl attracts more birds increasing concentrations in areas that may not be capable of naturally supporting large numbers. Also, hand-feeding waterfowl results in a dependency on humans, a loss of natural fear, and an increase in aggressive behavior.



✓ Feeding waterfowl leads to aggressive behaviors.

## HABITAT DEGRADATION

Increased concentrations of waterfowl can lead to the destruction of their habitat. Overcrowding due to feeding can lead to overgrazing and increased fecal deposition. Impacts to the habitat include soil erosion, unsanitary conditions, and a loss of plant life.

✓ Some waterfowl species deposit ~1 pound of feces per day.



## Observe but do not feed!

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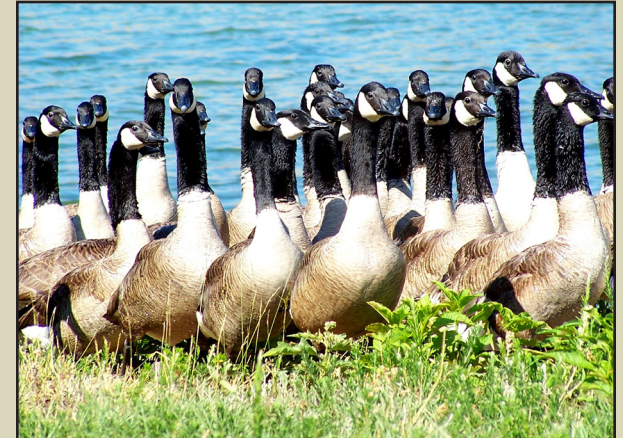
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# YOU CAN HELP WATERFOWL...

