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*Providing expertise on the management and conservation of birds and their habitats to sustain and enhance the military mission*



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# Canada Geese

## Management Methods for Urban/Resident Populations

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### Overview

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 protects 1,106 native bird species. This protection covers all native waterfowl in the United States, including migratory and resident Canada geese. The MBTA prohibits the hunting, killing, selling, purchasing, or possessing migratory birds without a permit from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Although "depredation" permits can be obtained to remove a limited number of birds from a specific area, non-lethal techniques can be employed without a permit and are usually successful in reducing or eliminating conflicts involving problematic urban and resident Canada geese.

### Habitat Modification

Canada geese often congregate near bodies of water where easy access to adjacent foraging areas exists. The number of geese at such sites may be reduced simply by minimizing the attractiveness of forage that exists near the pond and/or by eliminating access to foraging areas.

### Vegetation Management

Geese are grazers and need short, green grass for food. Allow grass or vegetation to grow longer (approx. 10 inches) within 50-75 feet of the water's edge and reduce watering and applying fertilizer to make the grass less productive.

### Exclusion

Geese prefer to land on water and walk onto adjacent grassy areas to feed and rest. The most effective tools for controlling the movement of geese are fences, hedgerows, and other physical barriers. In some cases, birds can be

deterred from small water bodies such as retention ponds by covering the water surfaces with floating discs, balls, or membranes.

### Structural Modification

Recreational facilities, subdivisions, and corporate properties where decorative or stormwater ponds are present often are favorite "hangouts" for geese. During the design of such sites, it is best to keep all recreational fields or other pedestrian traffic and use areas at least 450 feet from a water source. Also, every attempt should be made to build into the design numerous natural obstructions.



Canada goose - Tim Burr

### Behavior Modification

Geese, and other wild birds, can find their own food and will survive without handouts. Supplemental feeding by humans can lead to overpopulation, spread of disease, malnutrition, and aggressive behavior. Managers should institute strict "no feeding" policies to ensure the safety and health of geese and humans. Once people stop feeding them, geese will revert to better-quality natural foods.

## Harassment Techniques

### Visual Deterrents

Two-dimensional cutouts of coyotes have shown some initial success but birds quickly habituate to them. Taxidermy mounts of coyotes, when routinely moved around airports that also employ other control methods, have been effective against Canada geese. Flagging and kites or balloon/kite combinations that move in the wind have shown mixed effects as visual repellents. Mylar® ribbon or tape has deterred Canada geese. Lasers have also shown promise for dispersing geese.

### Auditory Deterrents

Generic sounds, whether recordings of actual events (e. g., gunshot, car horn) or synthetically made noises, may show immediate results, but birds tend to habituate quickly to them unless the sounds cause or are accompanied by pain or discomfort. Pyrotechnics and gas-operated cannons, generally referred to as propane cannons, are commonly used to disperse geese and other waterfowl from a number of locations, including agricultural crops, wastewater ponds, and airfields.

### Remote Controlled Vehicles

Remote controlled vehicles, including boats and aircraft, have successfully scared geese because they can be deployed in a threatening manner.

### Trained Dogs

Using dogs to harass geese from an area has become a popular and successful method. The use of dogs is not recommended while geese are nesting or in molt. Consult with the FWS, state, and local agencies regarding authorization and permits for use of dogs to haze geese.

## Reproduction Management

The Resident Canada Goose Nest and Egg Depredation Order was issued by the FWS in 2006 (50 CFR 21.50). The Depredation Order authorizes landowners and local governments who register with the FWS to destroy resident Canada goose nests and eggs on their property from March 1 through June 30, when necessary, to resolve or prevent injury to people, and damage to property, agricultural crops, or other interests.

## Repellents

There are effective goose repellents registered by EPA — methyl anthranilate and anthraquinone. These compounds are naturally occurring chemicals without hazardous residue.

## Population Reduction

After using some of these non-lethal management techniques over an extended period with little to no success, removal of some of the geese may be necessary to reinforce harassment or reduce the local population to a level that will allow non-lethal methods to be more effective.

## Relocation

Relocation of nuisance wildlife is often suggested rather than lethal removal. Although this seems humane, it may pose a threat to the animals themselves or may expand the areas in which nuisance damage occurs. Key concerns associated with the relocation of wildlife include: stress and mortality for the animals being moved; lack of suitable release sites; impacts on resident animals at release sites; disease spread to other wildlife, livestock, companion animals, and people; and relocated wildlife can return and continue to cause conflicts or can create a new problem in another location.

## Lethal Removal

Shooting a few birds each day may improve the effectiveness of harassment. Federal and/or State permits are always required. Capturing and removing birds by humane euthanasia can enhance the effectiveness of other management methods. It can successfully reduce the local resident goose population. Federal and some State regulations may allow the capture and removal of resident Canada geese between April 1 and August 31. Only trained professionals, with the required permits should carry out capture and removal work.

## Learn More

More information and resources about managing urban goose populations are available by contacting:

DoD Partners In Flight Committee Representative – <https://www.denix.osd.mil/dodpif/home/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - <https://www.fws.gov/>

USDA Wildlife Services - [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage).