

Pond and Lake Management Part III: Controlling Geese and Other Pests

Fact Sheet 1078



Cooperative Extension

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The Need for Pond and Lake Management

Natural or man-made waterbodies such as lakes and ponds are valuable resources, and management depends on the desired use. For example, not all lakes are suitable for swimming, and different management practices will be applied to areas where swimming is encouraged and areas where it is not. Human actions, as well as natural phenomena, contribute to unwanted pond and lake conditions. Excessive plant growth, algal blooms, oxygen depletion, sediment build-up, bank erosion, and pests are the most common issues faced in the management of a lake or pond. In many cases there is a "quick fix" remedy that can eliminate the symptoms of a problem at least temporarily. However, the issue will return if the root cause of the problem is not addressed. A sound pond or lake management plan addresses not only management of the symptoms, but also remediation of the causes of common pond and lake issues. This fact sheet is the third in a series that addresses common lake and pond problems.

Controlling Geese and Other Pests

Although ducks and other waterfowl can add an aesthetic quality to a pond or lake, their populations can grow to nuisance proportions. Large waterfowl populations contribute to excessive nutrient and elevated fecal coliform levels in the water. Goose and duck populations can be managed in a number of ways. They can either be discouraged from staying in the area or removed. Decoys and scarecrows can be used, but in time the birds become accustomed to them, and they

are no longer effective. Another option is to deter ducks, and especially geese, through limiting their food supply. Ordinances that prohibit feeding the waterfowl have been used to limit the population. Canadian geese tend to forage on lawns and eat most lawn grasses. Geese are a tundra species, and they do not like to be in situations with limited line of sight. Tall plants along the bank or aquatics such as cattails, which extend up to the edge of the water, will help deter geese from inhabiting the area. Border collies have been used to chase waterfowl. Contractors can be hired to perform this service. It is permissible to harass Canada geese without a Federal or State permit, *as long as these geese are not touched or handled by a person or the agent of a person (e.g., a trained dog)*. However, Federal and State permits are required to conduct any of the following activities:

- capture Canada geese
- relocate Canada geese
- addle goose eggs or destroy eggs or nests
- kill Canada geese outside the hunting season

Recent changes to the Federal regulations make these permits much easier to obtain in many cases. Information on how to obtain permits can be obtained by contacting:

State Director
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Animal Damage Control
RD#21, Box 360-C
Locust Grove Road
Pittstown, NJ 08867-9529 (908/735-5654)

RUTGERS

New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
88 Lipman Drive, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8525
Phone: 732.932.5000

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Muskrats and beavers can become a nuisance and can cause lake and pond problems. Muskrats burrow into banks and increase erosion when they feed on plants that stabilize shorelines. Beaver dams raise the level of a stream, or in some cases, an entire lake. Muskrats can be discouraged from burrowing into banks by anchoring chicken wire to the bank. Beavers can be forced to relocate by disassembling their dams or by applying a beaver repellent around the lodge, dam, or feeding areas. Trees can be protected by wrapping chicken wire around the trunk from the ground to a height of four feet. As a last resort, both muskrats and beavers can be trapped and removed from the area.

Additional Resources

Holdren, C.W. Jones & J. Taggart. 2001. Managing Lakes and Reservoirs. N. Am. Lake Manage. Soc. And Terrene Inst., in coop with Off. Water Assess. USEPA, Madison, WI.

Butler Sr., B. R. & Terlizzi, D. 1999. FS-766 Integrated Pond Management for Maryland.

<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE/Publications/Publication.cfm?ID=86>

Drake, David and J. B. Paulin. 2003. A Goose is a Goose? Identifying Differences Between Migratory and Resident Canada Geese. Rutgers Cooperate Research and Extension Fact Sheet FS1024.

<http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/download-free.asp?strPubID=FS1024>

Paulin, J.B. and David Drake 2003. Positive Benefits and Negative Impacts of Canada Geese. Rutgers Cooperate Research and Extension Fact Sheet FS1027.

<http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/pubs/download-free.asp?strPubID=FS1027>

USDA Fact Sheet on Goose Management:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws/statereports/NJ/cagocommunity.pdf>

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