



What Others are Doing

For many years, Manitoba Conservation has studied Canada goose populations throughout the province. In 1998, Manitoba Conservation also began to monitor resident and migrant goose populations in Winnipeg. This information will prove very helpful in any future management efforts.

Goose damage to agricultural crops, in and around the city, costs farmers, and ultimately the taxpayer, tens of thousands of dollars annually in lost crops and damage compensation payments. Manitoba Conservation, in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, helps farmers to prevent this damage through the Canada-Manitoba Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program. By participating in this program, farmers can borrow scare cannons, scarecrows and cracker shells to scare geese from their crops.

Furthermore, the City of Winnipeg regularly monitors the Deacon Water Reservoir to ensure the city's drinking water quality is maintained. Any change in water quality associated with geese can be readily detected and acted upon, especially during the height of fall migration.

There is also a team effort within the airline industry to minimize conflict between birds and aircraft, especially geese. The Winnipeg Airports Authority has a comprehensive program to control birds and other wildlife within airport boundaries. Nav Canada monitors the in-flight progress of large flocks of geese using radar and the visual observations of control tower personnel. This information, combined with recent pilot reports, is passed to arriving and departing aircrews to provide them with the most accurate and updated information on the local flight situation.

By discouraging Canada geese from your property, you will enhance the overall success of these efforts to reduce problems associated with geese in Winnipeg.

The Urban Goose Working Group

The increasing abundance of suitable habitat (man-made lakes, parks and golf courses), ample sources of food (lawns and agricultural crops) and lack of predators (fox and man) will encourage further growth of the Canada goose population in Winnipeg.

Because of growing concern about increasing goose numbers and related problems in Winnipeg, other government departments and non-government organizations indicated an interest in helping manage the burgeoning goose problem. As a result, the Urban Goose Working Group (UGWG) was formed in February 2000.

UGWG Members

- Manitoba Conservation
- Canadian Wildlife Service
- City of Winnipeg
- Winnipeg Airports Authority
- Air Canada
- Manitoba Wildlife Federation
- Winnipeg Humane Society

UGWG Mission Statement

To cooperatively manage urban geese within the City of Winnipeg in order to reduce the risk of goose-related adverse effects to human safety, health, and property, as well as the overall goose population itself.

UGWG Goal

To manage the Winnipeg urban goose population at an acceptable level within human safety, health, economic, biological and social tolerances.

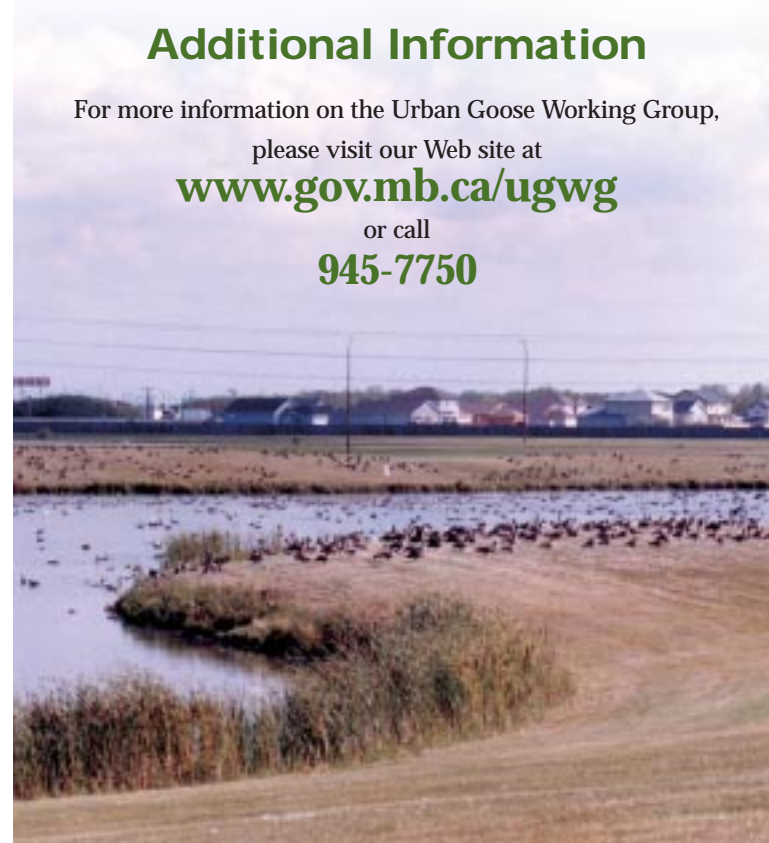
Additional Information

For more information on the Urban Goose Working Group, please visit our Web site at

www.gov.mb.ca/ugwg

or call

945-7750



Geese in Winnipeg

A Homeowner's Guide for Managing Canada Geese





Living with Canada Geese

In Winnipeg, we are fortunate to have an abundance of green space that allows many wildlife species, including geese, to coexist with us, and indeed thrive in our city. Many Winnipeggers enjoy the sight of Canada geese on their property and some people even encourage the presence of these birds by feeding them. A few geese may appear harmless, but in large numbers, they can become a major problem.

Geese nesting or feeding in an urban area can cause significant damage to lawns, parks, golf courses and even nearby agricultural crops. Without doubt, goose droppings foul lawns and sidewalks and can degrade water quality on urban lakes and reservoirs, posing a threat to human health. As well, increasing numbers of geese around the Winnipeg International Airport can be dangerous to arriving and departing aircraft.

Because urban geese are not exposed to the same risks as those in more remote areas, the goose population in Winnipeg is thriving. Recent surveys have shown that the number of geese in this city is growing at a significant rate each year. At the peak of fall migration, the Canada goose population in Winnipeg now exceeds 120,000 birds.

As the urban goose population grows and human/goose conflicts increase, residents' tolerance for these birds will decrease. If we are to continue to enjoy wild geese in Winnipeg, a balance must be struck between numbers of geese and associated risk to human health, safety and property. These concerns will play an important role in deciding the future of urban geese.

What You Can Do

As in other urban wildlife issues, a single, quick fix solution for the urban goose problem is unlikely. To reduce the attraction of geese and resulting damage to private property, residents should consider using one or more of the following techniques. These techniques have proven effective in many other cities.

Do Not Feed The Geese

Although feeding geese may seem like a beneficial thing to do, it may, in actual fact, do more harm than good:

- Geese become used to handouts and quickly lose their fear of humans, putting the birds more at risk.
- Feeding attracts other geese to an area, adding to the problem of too many geese in Winnipeg.
- Food given by humans is generally less nutritious and reliance on handouts can lead to malnourishment and possible mortality.
- Providing food often delays migration, resulting in added stress and mortality to geese.

In the absence of human handouts, geese are capable of finding available food and will survive quite well on their own.

Barrier Fencing

Fencing or other physical barriers can be effective where geese tend to land on water and walk up onto adjacent lawns to feed or rest. Effective barriers include:

- Wood fencing
- Chain link mesh
- Shrubs or hedgerows
- Boulders
- Temporary fencing (e.g. plastic snow fence or nylon mesh)

The fence or barrier should be at least 30" (75 cm) tall, solidly constructed and completely enclose the area to be protected. Geese are persistent and regular maintenance may be required to ensure the fence or barrier is preventing access.

Fencing can help keep geese out of your yard.

Lawn Care

Geese are grazing birds that prefer short, green grass for feeding, such as Kentucky bluegrass. Well-manicured lawns and newly seeded or sodded areas are particularly vulnerable to goose grazing damage. Simple changes in typical lawn care practices can reduce the attractiveness of lawns to geese:

- Allow grass to grow longer. Longer grass makes it harder for geese to find the young, tender shoots they prefer.
- Reduce the use of fertilizers. Fertilizers promote the growth of young, tender shoots that geese prefer.
- Reduce watering. Grass may stop growing during dry periods and new shoots will not be produced, reducing the attraction to geese.
- Plant grasses and shrubs that geese do not like (e.g. fescue and juniper).

A professional landscaper may be able to assist in the selection of proper grasses and shrubs.

Scaring (Hazing)

Visual scaring techniques to deter geese are usually inexpensive, may be quickly implemented, are quiet and can be used in most urban situations. The following have all been used with varying degrees of success:

- Strobe lights
- Mylar flash tape
- Flags
- "Scare eye" balloons
- Scarecrows

Geese may become used to these techniques, so they should be used in combination with other techniques previously noted. Noisemaking devices to scare geese will likely not be tolerated by your neighbours and are not recommended.



Delayed migration results in added stress and mortality

For more information on by-laws that may regulate use of any or all of these techniques, contact the City of Winnipeg at 986-2171.