

# Coexisting with Canada Geese

## Aren't there too many geese where I live? How does the state of North Carolina manage Canada goose numbers?

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission manages Canada geese primarily through hunting and technical guidance directed at site-specific nuisance goose situations. Although numbers of migratory Canada geese have declined over time, resident or local Canada geese have increased throughout the state. A September hunting season occurs statewide with a very liberal bag limit of 15 geese per day. Lengthy hunting seasons also occur throughout much of the state in fall and winter. Although hunting seasons have the potential to reduce goose numbers, sport harvest likely has little impact in urban and suburban areas. Targeted control (outside of hunting) by various methods is necessary in many areas where hunting is not an option.



US Fish & Wildlife

## Can I shoot geese in the act of damaging my agricultural crops?

Yes, but only with a depredation permit from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in hand. Prior to 2011, a federal depredation permit was required for any lethal take of Canada geese. However, the Wildlife Commission is now allowed to issue state permits to agricultural farmers who are suffering agricultural crop loss by resident Canada geese. Once an investigation of the damage is completed, Commission field personnel can issue a depredation permit if conditions warrant. The permit is restricted to the use of shotguns with nontoxic shot only and carries strict reporting requirements upon expiration of the permit. **Depredation permits from the Wildlife Commission can only be issued from May 1 to Aug. 31. When geese are damaging agricultural crops outside of this time period, a federal permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service is required for lethal take.** For more information and contact information for field personnel, visit [ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org).

## Can I shoot nuisance geese in the act of damaging my yard or my personal property?

Like hawks, owls, vultures, and ducks, resident Canada geese are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. While a state permit can be issued for lethal removal of geese committing agricultural crop damage (see above), under Federal law, a federal depredation permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is necessary before any Canada geese can be harmed while committing damage or nuisance in residential areas, gardens, or golf course/turfgrass situations. In these situations non-lethal techniques such as spray-repellents, goose-chasing dogs, and harassment are the only options available without a federal permit that allows the take of geese. The application for a federal permit can be found at [www.fws.gov/forms/3-200-13.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-200-13.pdf).



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## Can I manage goose problems by harassing Canada geese in my yard?

Yes, non-lethal techniques are lawful to prevent geese from continuing nuisance activities, but should not involve firearms without a federal permit in hand. Techniques may include vegetation management, chemical repellents, low fencing and other physical barriers, physical hazing/harassment, and harassment using pyrotechnics/noise. A Wildlife Commission biologist can provide technical guidance to determine which techniques should be implemented, as all techniques do not apply to every situation, particularly within residential areas. A good overview of techniques and their implementation is available at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/420/420-203/420-203.html> and <http://icwdm.org/Default.asp>.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife

## Can I remove or destroy Canada goose nests or eggs if they are located on my property?

Although the nests and eggs of migratory species are also protected by Federal law, there is a federal registry to allow the destruction of resident Canada goose nests and eggs on private or municipal property. Homeowners, landowners, or other management personnel who are interested in attempting to control goose numbers or alleviate nuisance issues by destroying nests and dispersing nesting geese can receive federal authorization by registering on the USFWS website at <https://epermits.fws.gov/eRCGR/geSI.aspx>. The website includes methods to handle the eggs. Once Federal authorization is obtained, eggs can be destroyed between March 1 and June 30. Any eggs destroyed must be reported by October 31.

## What is the most effective way to address goose nuisance issues in cities and towns?

Resident Canada geese and other tame waterfowl often make their homes in ponds, lakes, and other water sources associated with town parks or other recreational areas in and around urban and suburban locations. Often, several geese may be tolerated, but higher numbers create major nuisance issues due to defecation on walkways, boardwalks, and parking lots and/or aggressive behaviors. Prevention of issues with Canada geese should always be a key focus. Controlling food sources is typically the key to preventing or reducing nuisance issues in parks and other public areas. While people may not intend to contribute to goose nuisance issues, feeding geese and ducks reduces their fear of people, attracts higher numbers of birds, and can result in economic losses and potential health impacts in some instances. No one should be allowed to feed waterfowl in public places. Clearly posted "Do Not Feed" signs, as well as the enforcement of no-feeding rules and in conjunction with other non-lethal techniques, can prevent problems from starting. In those cases when goose numbers have increased to the point that nuisance issues can no longer be tolerated, contact USSDA-Aphis-Wildlife Services at 1-866-487-3297 or [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/) regarding the potential for contracted removal of problem geese under their federal permit..

## How can safety issues caused by Canada geese on airport runways be addressed?

When geese habitually feed on mowed grass along airport runways, high-profile airport safety issues often result. It is necessary to prevent problems through the annual management of goose numbers, harassment, and reduced habitat quality. Currently USDA-Aphis-Wildlife Services has a very active airport control program at many larger airports in North Carolina. Contact USDA-Aphis-Wildlife Services at 1-866-487-3297 regarding annual wildlife hazard reduction plans that combine various non-lethal and lethal management techniques.



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