

While many people enjoy seeing Canada geese, problems can occur when too many geese concentrate in one area. In particular, Canada geese can become a nuisance to the landowner whose property they invade. Problems include accumulations of droppings and feathers, nutrient loading in ponds, public health concerns at beaches and drinking water supplies, aggressive behavior by nesting birds, and safety hazards near roads. Geese also can damage lawns and agricultural crops by excessive grazing.

Landowners who are concerned about the effects of geese may want to consider modifying the landscape to dissuade geese from coming onto the property, scaring the geese away, and/or shooting geese as allowable by permit. These options are briefly described in this brochure, which was compiled by the Pemaquid Watershed Association as a service to its members. This brochure is provided only as a guide to some of the options available.

PWA assumes no liability nor responsibility for any consequences, damages, costs and/or losses arising from use of any of these options.



Canada geese — and all native waterfowl — are protected under both the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Maine state law. This protection extends to the birds' nests and eggs.

The Pemaquid Watershed Association is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the natural resources of the Pemaquid Peninsula of Maine through land and water stewardship and education.

Est. 1966

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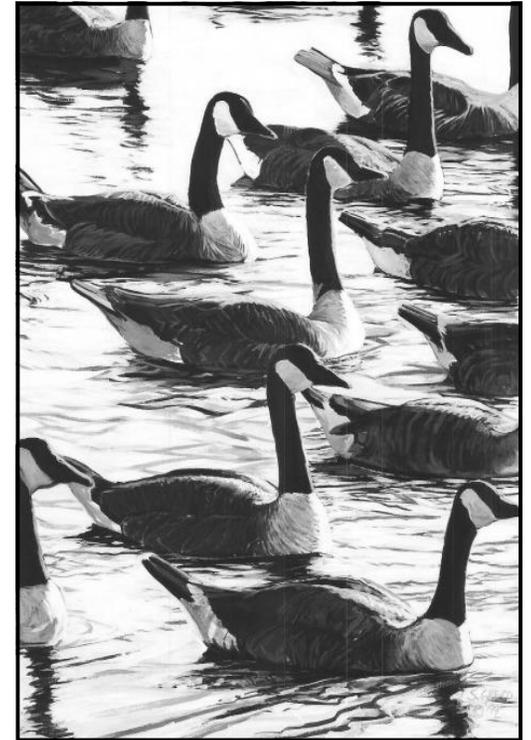
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When Canada Geese become a Pest: Options for Landowners



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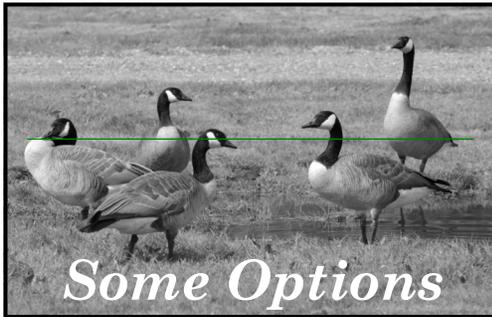


Pemaquid Watershed Association

Conserving the natural resources

of the Pemaquid Peninsula of Maine.

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A. Landscape Modification

Accessible, expansive lawns and open “sight lines” create goose nirvana. The most lasting way to minimize goose problems, and often the most cost-effective in the long run, is to change the habitat. The goals are to reduce goose food, hinder access, and increase the birds' wariness of potential danger. Here are some suggestions on how to modify the landscape to make it unfriendly to geese.

1. Reduce Food

Geese are grazers and feed extensively on fresh, short, green grass. Young grass shoots, particularly those of finer-bladed species such as Kentucky bluegrass, are the preferred food of geese. Any technique that reduces the proportion or availability of young shoots of finely bladed species within a foraging area will reduce the attractiveness of that area to geese. Simple changes in property maintenance can help, such as reducing the area of lawn, reducing or eliminating mowing and fertilizer use, and not watering the lawn.

2. Decrease Sight Lines

Geese prefer long sight lines in order to spot or escape predators and to feel safe. Suitable goose habitat generally consists of large areas of low vegetation, typically grass, adjacent or close to open water, where sight lines are long and early predator detection and escape are facilitated. Reducing sightlines to the point where geese are uncomfortable (<30 ft) is the most general landscape principle that can be applied to reduce the attractiveness of an area to geese. The shoreline should look like a continuous wall of vegetation.

According to experts, geese select forage sites based primarily on safety considerations.

3. Impede Access

Combining measures to reduce sight lines with measures to impede a goose's access to the land will greatly diminish the appeal of the property to geese. Planting tall grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs along the shoreline, with a winding path to allow human access, creates a wall that blocks both visual and physical access for the birds while maintaining access for the landowner. Creating a hedge with a gate to allow human access to the water also reduces sight lines and access. Another option is to create a hard edge that has a large vertical drop where the water meets the land by building a boardwalk or placing boulders that are more than two feet in diameter.

Before making any significant alterations next to a pond, be sure to consult your local Code Enforcement Officer about the relevant regulations, such as those related to shoreland zoning.

B. Scare Devices

A search of the Internet will quickly reveal dozens of things that have been used to harass geese to keep them off a property. Because geese lose their fear of simple scare devices quickly, the harassment approach typically has little lasting effect. One technique that has had some longer-term effectiveness for scaring geese away is to have dogs on the property to convince geese they are not safe from predators.

Harassment techniques are non-lethal. It is legal to harass Canada geese without a permit as long as they are not touched or handled by a person or a dog.

C. Lethal Control

Landowners may choose to obtain a license to shoot Canada Geese from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This license allows the landowner to kill up to 20% of the average number of geese that land on their property. The license is issued for one year and may be renewed. Contact Robin Dyer at USFWS 207-629-5189, or Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife at 207-287-8000 for more information. Lethal control may be most effective in situations where non-migrating flocks of Canada geese have become established.