



Waterfowl & Water Quality

Canada Geese and other waterfowl are common sights around our lakes, ponds and golf courses. Typically, these waterfowl migrate in the fall. However, they have become year-round residents in unusually high concentrations at various public use areas. Waterfowl droppings create a health risk to humans and can affect water quality. Fecal material contains bacteria, such as *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which occur naturally in the digestive tracts of warm-blooded animals. *E. coli* can cause gastrointestinal problems such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The presence of *E. coli* may also indicate the existence of other pathogenic organisms.



Are we inviting waterfowl to take up residence?

It's a popular pastime to take the kids to the lake to feed the ducks and geese. When ducks and geese are handfed an unnatural diet, they forget about their natural foraging instincts and rely on handouts. Their numbers will grow, as does the amount of droppings accumulating around and in the lake. The increase of droppings can lead to swim beach closures.

Do not feed the geese and ducks! Human food is harmful and unhealthy to waterfowl. Artificial feeding can cause obesity and malnutrition, which in turn can lead to disease and deformities. Wild waterfowl are very capable of finding natural foods and will survive without handouts from humans.

Geese are grazing birds that prefer well-manicured lawns and newly seeded areas next to a water body. Allow grass or other vegetation to grow to mature height (12-14") to reduce the appeal to waterfowl. Plant native shrubs and ground cover around the shoreline and along walkways where geese are a nuisance.

Do your part to protect water quality. Admire the wild ducks and geese, but don't feed them. Adopt landscaping practices and techniques that are good for water quality and good for waterfowl.