

GOOSE TRACKS



Status Report on Humane Canada Goose Management from The Humane Society of the United States

Rockford Moves Geese for the Molt

RESIDENT CANADA GEESE DON'T MIGRATE, right? Not necessarily. Some resident geese *do* migrate from nesting areas before they molt. Molt migration is not well understood, but apparently some adults who are not raising young move north to molt. Since egg treatment programs increase the number of adults without goslings, more geese from treated sites seem to make molt migrations. Geese on molt migrations leave open urban and suburban green spaces just in time for peak human use in midsummer, reducing the conflicts between people and geese in these areas.

But how aggressive does your egg program need to be to ensure that there will be a molt migration? The Rockford (Illinois) Park District isn't sure but knows it's reached the right numbers.

"Two years in a row, at about the same time (the third

week in June), the only birds we had left on our river corridor were the goose pairs raising goslings," said Jan Herbert, project manager. In the first year of the program, the district and its partners around Winnebago County oiled 1,153 eggs. In 2002 the total climbed to 1,758, and in 2003 the numbers reached 2,224.

The egg oiling effort concentrated on the river and the river corridor in these three years. In the future, organizers will look to outlying areas using public information and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify potential nesting sites. "We know we won't be able to oil *all* the eggs in our county, but would still like to continue to reduce the number of goslings," said Herbert. "We are very aware it only takes three years for those goslings to turn into breeding pairs—which adds to the challenge." ■

Seattle Reconsiders Killing

FEDERAL WILDLIFE AGENTS, UNDER CONTRACT to local authorities, have killed more than 5,600 Canada geese in Seattle since 2000. During the molt, agents packed the flightless birds into mobile gas chambers on the backs of trucks and poisoned them with carbon dioxide gas. The HSUS questions whether this method of killing Canada geese is humane and doubts it can truly be called "euthanasia."

The killing program brought protesters out to parks and public meetings, earned Mayor Greg Nickels the "Mayor Goosekill" Award, drew calls for tourists to bypass Seattle, provoked an ethics complaint against the Parks Superintendent, generated hundreds of calls and e-mails

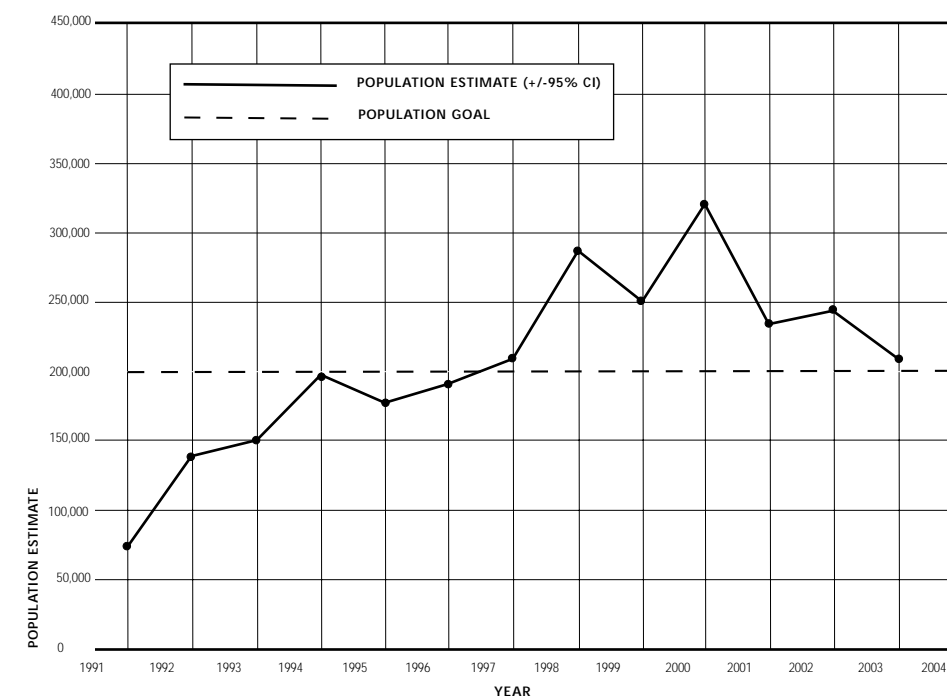
to local authorities asking them to stop the kill, and ignited controversy throughout the community that burned higher year to year as the killing continued. Finally, after killing Canada geese during this molt season, Seattle Parks and Recreation Superintendent Ken Bounds told animal welfare organizations that the city is considering a moratorium on the killing. The regional Gamefowl Management Task Force is considering an integrated humane management program beginning next season. The HSUS and the Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) have offered technical assistance and volunteers to make this program a reality and replace the killing program with a humane one. ■

Michigan Program Grows and Population Drops

MICHIGAN'S CANADA GOOSE egg program expanded in 2003 from the original three counties in metropolitan Detroit and the city of Alpena into two other urban centers where it is critically needed—Ann Arbor and Sault Sainte Marie. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) annual estimate of the number of Canada geese in southeastern Michigan has dropped by more than 100,000 birds over the past three years, reversing the exponential growth trend noted in previous years. The egg removal program has certainly contributed to this success where it has been used.

The sixth year of the program, which is sponsored jointly by the MDNR and The HSUS, went smoothly, according to Julie Oakes of the MDNR. A total of 217 sites yielded 5,924 eggs from 1,151 nests. Over the past six years, the program has prevented 22,746 eggs from hatching. In addition, hundreds of landowners and wildlife contractors have learned a variety of humane goose conflict prevention techniques that can be used year-round through the program's mandatory training sessions.

A continuing study undertaken by Michigan State University in which geese whose eggs are removed are radio-collared and tracked suggests that many of them actually migrate north to



The HSUS/MDNR egg removal program in Michigan contributed to a smaller Canada goose population. With three years of falling population estimates, the MDNR is pleased with the trend as the estimated population nears the state's goal for these birds. The egg program has been active for six years in the largely urbanized southeastern part of the state, where most of the Canada geese are found.

Canada. These geese return to the state in the fall, thus reducing summertime conflicts with humans swimming and boating on Michigan lakes.

"Michigan's program is a model of cooperation between a state wildlife agency, local residents experiencing goose conflicts, and the humane community," noted Linda Reider, regional coordinator for The HSUS Great Lakes Regional Office. "However, we continue to get calls from other urban and suburban areas of the state that are experiencing problems. I certainly hope that the MDNR will make the egg program available to residents who need it, no matter where they are located in the state." ■

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Bright News from Brighton

EFFORTS TO STABILIZE THE CANADA goose population in Brighton, New York, are working. Town officials said the campaign—including making ponds less accessible, oiling eggs, discouraging feeding by people, and using Border collies—have controlled the flocks.

Cornell University graduate student Robin Holevinski and another dozen people—including volunteers, representatives from Cornell, and the New York state Department of Environmental Conservation—banded more than 200 birds at several locations in Brighton this nesting season. At one site, Monroe Community College, Holevinski noted fewer goslings in the age mix and credited that to oiling eggs.

Holevinski's real goal is to study where the geese go when they leave Brighton. Last year, Holevinski banded 277 geese and fitted nine with radio transmitters. Many geese stayed in the area but several migrated to Virginia and Pennsylvania. This year Holevinski fitted seven more birds with radio transmitters. Brighton Town Board member Jim Vogel said, "We want to know where they go when they migrate to make sure we aren't sending them over the border



Egg oiling contributed to Brighton's success.



to a neighboring town." Brighton formed a task force in 2000, and through its efforts Brightonians have stabilized the goose population without harming the birds. Egg oiling volunteers found fewer Canada geese nesting in Brighton. The number of nests and eggs declined during the three-year program—nests by about one quarter and eggs by nearly a third.

The Brighton task force also did its first molt count of Canada geese in June. A dozen volunteers simultaneously counted geese at goose hotspots. They found 191 geese, significantly fewer than the expected 300 resident Canada geese. ■

Speak Out on USFWS Proposal

THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (USFWS) proposed new regulations August 21 that would make state wildlife agencies responsible for managing resident Canada geese. If adopted, the regulations will implement the USFWS plan in its *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*, originally released in February 2002. The *Draft EIS* and proposed regulations embrace large-scale killing of resident Canada geese over the next 10 years—between 480,000 and 852,000 each year, totaling roughly 5 to 8.5 million—all in order to reach an *arbitrary* population number.

The details of how state control will affect local humane programs are unclear and likely to vary from state to state. The proposed regulations pay lip service to humane management but do not require it. States may kill or allow others to kill resident geese by several methods, including shooting, and may allow additional resident goose hunting in late summer—outside the usual season for migrating geese—with no limit

on the number each hunter may kill. Geese will not have to cause any real or perceived damage or inconvenience to be killed.

The USFWS is accepting comments until October 20, 2003. Contact: Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, MBSP-4107, Arlington, Virginia 22203; e-mail canada_goose_eis@fws.gov. The USFWS will not consider anonymous comments.

The USFWS is also accepting additional comments on the *Draft EIS* until October 20. Whether you commented on it last year or not, let the agency know what you think. For copies of the *Draft EIS* and proposed regulations, call the USFWS at 703-358-1714, e-mail canada_goose_eis@fws.gov, or visit <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov>.

Check www.wildneighbors.org for The HSUS's view on these regulations and their potential impact on resident Canada geese and humane geese management programs and a link to the complete text. ■

GeesePeace Comes to Boston

THE MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY FOR the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) Living with Wildlife program brought GeesePeace to the heavily used green spaces of the Charles River Esplanade and Boston Common and Public Garden this year. Massachusetts



Maisie the Border collie at work in Boston, waiting for her handler's signal.

communities learned about GeesePeace in 2002 at public workshops and forums. Last summer Sharon, a growing town between Boston and Providence, humanely kept its lakes, beaches, and other recreation areas goose-free.

The Esplanade Association, a nonprofit group of people dedicated to protecting their beloved park along the Charles River, approached the state with the GeesePeace idea. While the Esplanade Association initiated the effort, the association's Michael Hosmer credited the collaborative effort of many organizations—including the MSPCA, GeesePeace, community associations, local government agencies, and local businesses—with making it happen. Volunteers oiled eggs in the spring. Later, trained Border collies encouraged the geese to fly to higher tolerance zones to molt. After the molt the Border collies will return and work into the early fall. The MSPCA and GeesePeace are working with the local government to post signs in popular feeding areas and to get the word out about not feeding Canada geese. ■

Want to Go to the Dogs?

THE HSUS OFFERS A LIST OF CANADA GOOSE DOG HARASSMENT SERVICE providers. The listing is not exhaustive but presents a starting point for information about goose dog services.

Specially trained herding dogs, often Border collies, can be very effective in hazing Canada geese away from areas where they are not welcome (*Goose Tracks*, August 2002, Issue 2). Services offering trained and handled dogs to haze geese, usually under contract, have been springing up. Most services work within a specific geographic area.

Trained dogs can also be purchased. The HSUS is concerned about the welfare of the dogs as much as the welfare of the geese. We particularly urge property owners and managers to consider carefully whether they can make a lifelong commitment to provide their working dogs an appropriate home with human companionship, daily exercise, food, and veterinary care before purchasing them.

For a copy of our list or to submit information about your dog service, e-mail mbrasted@hsus.org or call 301-548-7753. ■

Big Program or Small, All Contribute

HERE ARE NUMBERS REPORTED by several programs for their 2003 spring nesting season. Some numbers are preliminary. Regardless of size, each program contributes to reducing conflicts with geese and models humane solutions for such conflicts wherever they occur. ■

Location	Number of Sites Visited	Number of Nests Treated	Number of Eggs Oiled/Removed
New Castle County, Delaware	15	66	314
Mission Lake, Missouri	1	9	70
Brighton, New York	1	23	134
Sharon, Massachusetts	1	4	15
Boston, Massachusetts	1	48	212
Southeastern Michigan	217	1,151	5,924
Rockford, Illinois	31	646	2,224
Montgomery County, Maryland	22	77	382
Morristown, New Jersey	2	29	149