

Frequently Asked Questions About GOOSE MANAGEMENT

What is the procedure for a First Nations led Canada geese harvest?

On the City's behalf, a kill permit application is prepared by the Guardians of our Salish Estuaries Society (GooSE) for review by the Province of BC and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Should the permit be approved, Snaw-naw-as First Nation, with technical support from GooSE, will carry out all aspects permitted by the regulatory agencies to reduce locally over-abundant Canada Geese in the Parksville region. The geese will be harvested in a humane manner according to Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Services best practices for Canada Goose management and standard operating procedures developed by the province and approved by the BC Wildlife Chief Veterinarian.



What are the problems with geese?

Geese have overgrazed the mid-island estuarine marshes and in particular, the Englishman River and Little Qualicum River estuaries. Estuaries in the mid-island are critical winter habitat for migratory birds. Uninformed wildlife managers transplanted Canada Geese to our area in the 1970's which resulted in a growing local Canada Goose population which now utilize estuaries year-round.

Our mid-island estuaries are important for an estimated 80% of coastal fish and wildlife, especially salmon, trout, Bald Eagles, Great Blue Heron, and migratory birds. Native waterfowl and other native birds no longer nest in the Englishman River estuary due to displacement by



invasive Canada Geese which have become resident birds – many do not leave city limits where they could be hunted. Across all seasons, goose counts were highest at the estuaries. During the molt, which occurs from mid-June to mid-July, geese concentrate in the estuaries and in marine and freshwater habitats.

During cold weather, estuaries are critical for the survival of all migratory waterfowl and resident geese that compete for limited food resources. As well, in the fall and winter, estuaries are preferred roosting and loafing sites. Degradation along the estuary by the geese can increase the potential for flooding along the river and severely degrade critical habitat necessary for salmon fry survival.

What approaches to population control have already been used?

Targeted harvests of invasive Canada Geese have been proven to greatly reduce the local nesting population and provide a sustainable, high quality food source for local First Nations. Additional mitigation efforts have been used locally; examples include:

- Hazing with dogs and volunteers in specific areas of Parksville and the use of a falconer with an eagle to harass geese.
- Since 2002, members of the Guardians led efforts to reduce regional Canada Goose populations by adding over 10,000 eggs and surveyed geese in the region to learn more about their seasonal abundance, use of estuaries and other habitats.
- Population control through egg adding focused on the Englishman River and although successful in preventing many eggs from hatching, and helping to stabilize populations, this does not provide the immediate population reduction needed to protect local estuaries.
- The City regularly conducts mechanical sweeps in parks and sports fields to remove goose feces.

Many of these approaches will continue to be used to further mitigate impacts to our region.

Why not leave the geese alone?

Non-migratory resident Canada Geese are not native to Vancouver Island. These birds were introduced from Eastern Canada in the 1960's and 1970's for wildlife viewing and hunting and have displaced native birds that at one time, nested in our estuaries. When populations continue to increase, public health and safety as well as the ecological services provided by our estuaries are at risk. Impacts to the Englishman River estuary from Canada Geese now exceed all historical log booming and dyke related impacts in the previous century.

Are all geese being targeted?

No. Migratory geese using the Parksville region as part of their traditional and instinctive migratory pathway will not be targeted. Brant Geese utilize foreshore eel grass habitats and do not come into the estuaries. All migratory waterfowl stay in the region for a few days or weeks in the spring and fall. Some spend the winter only. They do not nest here, nor do they cause the conflicts which we have been addressed with our initiatives.

How can you tell the difference between resident and migratory geese?

Physically they look the same but behaviourally the geese are very different.

- Migratory geese are not present in the summer
- Migratory geese do not nest here
- Migratory geese use traditional routes and habitats on those routes are rarely present in more urban locations
- Black Brant Geese are smaller, like a Mallard duck. Resident Canada Geese are three times larger, lighter in colour, do not utilize grassy fields, parklands or the estuary, are found at sea or along the foreshore tidelines in Parksville Bay, Craig Bay, Rathrevor Beach, and on/near gravel bars of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area.
- Professional ornithologists are always on site during a harvest to aid in identification issues which may arise.

Will the geese be used for consumption?

Local First Nations will use all goose meat from harvesting activities which occur on their traditional territories. Down feathers are also collected and used for ceremonial purposes. Remaining portions of the carcasses will be disposed of according to animal disposal guidelines.

Why not allow open hunting?

Bylaw No. 1458 prohibits the discharge of a rifle, shotgun, spring gun, firearm or bow for the purposes of hunting within the City of Parksville.

Do other places have this problem?

Yes. This is an issue throughout southern BC and Vancouver Island. Many other areas in Canada and the United States also struggle with geese. Information is available on the internet about different areas, issues and management techniques.

RESOURCES available at Parksville.ca

- Canada Goose Management Strategy for Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region
- City of Parksville Bylaw No. 1458
- Additional background information and reference materials

And from:

- Guardians of our Salish Estuaries
www.estuaryguardians.org
- Environment Canada and Climate Change
<https://www.ec.gc.ca/mbc-com>

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