

GOOSE TRACKS



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

Asphyxiation without Representation *(continued)*

in Olney. Suburban communities are a checkerboard of publicly managed, HOA-controlled, and privately owned land. Figuring out who is responsible for a particular piece of goose territory is often the first step in impacting decisions affecting the birds. Individuals can take many actions to make a difference.

- Stay involved and informed by reading local newspapers and HOA newsletters, monitoring e-mail listservs or websites, and talking with neighbors
- Ask HOA board and municipal government candidates about their views and vote in both HOA and local elections
- Volunteer to serve on a board or committee that influences decisions on animals and propose such a board or committee if one doesn't exist
- Propose a community-wide policy to coexist with wildlife, which will guide future community actions toward animal-friendly decisions

The appalled and saddened Olney residents who opposed the kill are organizing to make sure their voices are heard in the future. Whether you create a new organization, join an existing organization, or informally get together and talk with others who care about animals, your voice will be stronger when joined with other voices in defense of humane treatment.

Trying to Do a Job

Private and public property managers may feel they are between the rock of public dislike for droppings and the hard place of limited resources. Killing the geese may look like an easy, quick fix. However, the cost of responding to

public outrage and, for private entities, the potential lost revenue from becoming a public symbol of irresponsibility may be many times greater than the resources a manager hopes to save by killing.

Trust is a very valuable but very elusive commodity. Once lost by an ill-considered attempt to sneak a goose kill past a community, trust may never be regained. Communities polarize over heart-wrenching kills, ending open and civil discourse. These are resources that should not be squandered. And to top off all the animosity, anger, and community division, killing won't be the end of Canada geese issues on the property. As long as attractive habitat is available, geese will find it—unless other changes are made.

There is no one easy, quick fix for every problem between people and Canada geese. Managers who identify how, when, and why geese are using their properties can develop a long-term program with the best combination and timing of techniques to make the property less attractive to geese and reduce conflicts between people and geese. Open communication about goose issues will pay long-term dividends of trust, community buy-in, and volunteers to help implement a goose management program. ■



GOOSE TRACKS

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Asphyxiation without Representation

Residents Didn't Approve Kill

By **Maggie Brasted**, Assistant Director,
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EIGHT MEN, A PICKUP TRUCK, a kayak, and a van with a portable gas chamber arrive at a suburban pond in Olney, Maryland. It's early morning on July 1, just before Independence Day. The men are not here to liberate anyone.

Their presence has attracted residents from the condominiums that overlook the pond and from nearby homes. The shocked residents have a look of horror on their faces as the men herd Canada geese into a small, portable pen, where the birds cower in the corner. The geese are molting—growing new feathers—and cannot escape by flying away.

One by one, the geese are lifted out of the pen, honking and flapping in protest, contorting their elegant black necks. The men push the birds into the van's gas chamber. As gas fills the chamber, onlookers standing several yards away can hear the geese banging and thumping, trying to escape. With all the ceremony of taking out the trash, the dead geese are dumped in plastic bags and piled into the back of the pickup to make room in the gas chamber for more birds.

It's all over by 9 a.m. A handful of geese escaped this death sentence, survivors of a dark numbers game. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit for this kill set the death count at 100.



The board of a homeowners association and a hired professional management company killed 100 Canada geese at a suburban Olney, Maryland, pond—despite residents' request for a public reconsideration of the decision.

A View to a Kill

Residents witnessing this slaughter were overwhelmingly distressed and angry. They said that the board of their homeowners association (HOA) and their hired professional management company planned this kill without making sure the residents were informed and had a chance to have a say in this controversial decision.

In a last-ditch effort to stop the killings, residents collected signatures to call a special meeting of the board to reopen the lethal decision. As of midnight on Wednesday, residents believed they had enough signatures and left a message informing management of this update. However, the slaughter went ahead before business hours on Thursday,

despite the fact that the petition included the signature of one of the five board members who had originally voted for the kill but changed his mind after learning how many neighbors opposed it. Another board member was ready to talk Thursday morning, too, but the management firm pushed the kill ahead before the petition could be presented.

Why did they kill 100 geese? The birds' droppings dirtied the walking path.

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Where Are Things Happening?

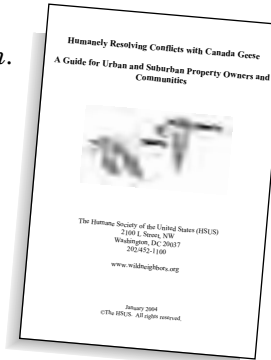
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Goose Guide Available

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED States (HSUS) has compiled a definitive guide for resolving conflicts with Canada geese. Written for urban and suburban property owners and communities, the guide is packed with up-to-date information, including humane tools and tactics and retail sources for products. You can download *Humanely Resolving Conflicts with Canada Geese: A Guide for Urban and Suburban Property Owners and Communities* in PDF format from www.hsus.org/ace/20343. PDF format files can be viewed and printed with Adobe Acrobat® Reader® software, which is available for free

download at www.adobe.com. You can view the guide chapter-by-chapter on The HSUS website beginning at the same page. Or request a guide be mailed to you by e-mailing wildlife@hsus.org or writing Wildlife and Habitat Protection, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037. ■



The Seattle Goose Program

A Community-Based Project to Beautify Parks While Coexisting with Canada Geese*

EACH SUMMER FOR THE PAST FEW years, Canada geese in Seattle's public parks have been rounded up and killed as part of a government program to reduce the number of geese in public areas. The geese are maligned by some because they foul beaches and playing fields with their droppings. In March The HSUS and PAWS agreed to a joint venture with the Seattle Parks Department to develop and promote humane methods of managing the conflict between geese and park patrons. PAWS and The HSUS recruited and trained volunteers, whose efforts will be coordinated under an official Parks Department program.

The volunteers assist the Puget Sound's regional addling effort by locating nesting sites in the spring. They also mitigate the impact of geese by cleaning beaches and grassy areas at some of the city's most popular gathering spots, including Gas Works and Green Lake parks. In addition to taking care of such "dirty work," trained volunteers use light-emitting laser devices to shoo geese away from the sites at which they cause the greatest number of citizen complaints.

According to John Hadidian, Ph.D., director of The HSUS Urban Wildlife Program, geese can be "de-habituated" with proven approaches, including laser harassment, repellants, trained dogs, and appropriate use of exclusion. "The birds are smart, and learn quickly to avoid spots where they're likely to encounter dogs, bright lights, or other irritants. Encouraging geese to move where

they're more likely to be tolerated is one of the best ways to keep the birds out of harm's way," Hadidian said.

South Lake Union Park was treated with FlightControl PLUS®, a repellent specially designed to keep geese from feeding in particular grassy areas. PAWS, The HSUS, and the Seattle Parks Department thank the SePRO company, providers of FlightControl PLUS, as well as AquaTechnex, a local distributor, for donating their products and services to the Seattle Goose Program for this demonstration site.

The Seattle Goose Program educates the public about the harmful effects of feeding wildlife, especially waterfowl. Landscape modifications to Seattle parks that can discourage geese, help restore habitat for other wildlife, and benefit salmon runs will be explored in coming years.

As part of the agreement to participate in this joint program, The Seattle Parks Department agreed to suspend lethal removal of geese within parks through 2005. If the pilot program is successful, it will be expanded to more city parks next year, and humane management methods will make the killing of these majestic birds a thing of the past in Seattle. ■



The HSUS and PAWS have joined with the Seattle Parks Department to develop a humane goose control pilot project for the city's parks that includes egg addling, beach and lawn cleaning efforts, laser harassment, and repellants.

Asphyxiation without Representation *(continued)*

The management firm tried some limited humane approaches, but none of them addressed the real concern at this property—geese congregating for the molt. The HSUS and others offered to assist this community to manage the conflicts between people and Canada geese humanely, but the management did not respond to any offers that would have spared the geese.

Washington, D.C., affiliates of all major TV networks ran stories on the kill with footage of trappers gassing the geese and bagging them as trash. National Public Radio, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, and the local *Olney Gazette* covered the story. Hundreds of thousands of viewers, listeners, and readers in the area learned about the division and conflict in this community caused by the decision to kill the geese.

Secret Geese Police

Just a handful of people condemned 100 geese—against the wishes of nearly 200 residents who signed the petition. On Thursday, as the slaughter proceeded, the residents who tried to stop the kill had to stand by as police kept them away from their own pond and common area. Near tears, resident Ioana Hance said, "We've been given the runaround by the management company and board. This is what happens with our own money when we don't get involved in our community because five people wanted this done, and they had [the management company] on their side."

Residents said they only learned about the planned kill because of a chance remark by a board member just days before the roundup. But the management company applied for the federal permit and hired the trapper months ago.

After that chance remark, residents and animal-

friendly organizations flooded the property management office with calls and e-mails. Reporters called for interviews. Management responded with a bunker mentality, keeping their heads down, telling people as little as possible, getting the trapper out of there fast, and hoping it would blow over. It isn't blowing over, though, and now residents are seeking positive, humane, and permanent remedies so this never happens again.

You can see the video of this roundup at www.hsus.org/olney, but his scene is not unique—variations play out in communities across the United States. More than 1,000 lethal roundups occur each year, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In Seattle, Washington, more than 5,600 Canada geese were rounded up and killed between 2000 and 2003, before municipal authorities acceded to demands to adopt more humane approaches. (See page 2.) The killing program brought protesters out to parks and public meetings, earned the mayor the "Mayor Goosekill" Award, drew calls for tourists to bypass Seattle, provoked an ethics complaint against the city superintendent, generated hundreds of calls and e-mails to local authorities, and ignited a controversy that burned brighter year after year as the killings continued.

Like those in Seattle, the Olney killings occurred despite significant opposition. Both cases serve as cautionary tales about how a few uninformed or intolerant people can ignore or override the wishes of the many who want the animals in their communities treated humanely. Both also serve as cautionary tales for property managers who think a goose "problem" can be simply rubbed out by putting a contract on the geese.

You Live Here, Too

People can help the geese—and help their own communities—avoid a tragic scene like the one



THE HSUS

*ADAPTED FROM *THE PROGRESSIVE ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY (PAWS)*