

# Frequently Asked Questions About GOOSE MANAGEMENT

## What is the procedure to cull geese?

On the City's behalf, a kill permit application was prepared by the Guardians of the Mid-Island Estuaries Society for review by the Province of BC and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Should the permit be approved, a contractor will be hired this summer to carry out all aspects permitted by the regulatory agencies to reduce locally overabundant Canada Geese in the Parksville area. The geese will be culled 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 over 80 pairs of 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, geese concentrate in the estuaries and in marine and fresh water habitats.

During cold weather, estuaries are critical for the survival of all migratory waterfowl and resident geese that compete for limited food resources. Degradation along the estuary by Canada Geese can increase the potential for flooding along the river and also severely degrade critical habitat necessary for salmon fry survival.



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 also severely degrade critical habitat necessary for salmon fry survival.

## What approaches to population control have already been used?

Culling geese is a "last resort" option to be considered when mitigation efforts, which have been ongoing in the City since 2004, have limited success. Examples include:

- Hazing with dogs and volunteers in the Community Park, Springwood Park and along Jensen Avenue East and 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 6,000 eggs and surveyed geese in the region to learn more about their seasonal abundance, use of estuaries and other habitats.
- Population control through egg addling focused on the Englishman River and although successful in preventing many eggs from hatching, the number of nesting geese in the estuary has increased.
- The City regularly conducts mechanical sweeps in our parks and sports fields to remove goose feces.

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

## 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 stage in our region for a few days or weeks in the spring and fall. Some spend the winter only; do not nest here nor do they cause the conflicts which we have been addressing in our initiatives.

## 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. If populations continue to increase, public health and safety as well as the ecological services provided by our estuaries will be 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.

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## 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 and are rarely present in more urban locations
- Black Brant Geese are much smaller, similar to a Mallard duck. Resident Canada Geese are three times larger, much 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 and on/near gravel bars of the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area.

## Can geese be used for public consumption?

The *Migratory Birds Regulations* do not allow "donation of birds to another person or entity, including permit nominees" (currently being evaluated). Carcasses will be disposed of according to animal disposal guidelines and may be used to help feed other birds like hawks and eagles held at wildlife rehabilitation centres or used for pet food.



## Why not allow open hunting?

Bylaw No. 1458 prohibits the discharge of a rifle, shotgun, spring gun, fire arm 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. Other areas in Canada and the US also struggle with geese. Information is available on the internet about different areas, issues and management techniques. The first cull on Vancouver Island was held in the Capital Region in 2015.

## RESOURCES available at [Parksville.ca](http://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 Mid-Island Estuaries Society  
[www.guardiansmie.org](http://www.guardiansmie.org)
- Environment Canada and Climate Change  
<https://www.ec.gc.ca/mbc-com>

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