



PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 18, 2022**

BE WARY OF GEESE “LOAFING” IN MUSCATINE

City goose management program working well, but please don't feed birds human food

MUSCATINE, Iowa – Numerous reports of geese grazing outside the confines of Weed Park in Muscatine have been received by Animal Control and the Muscatine Police Department, but the number of geese is much more manageable now than four years ago according to the Parks and Recreation Department.

Still, geese have been spotted wandering around the Muscatine urban area in recent weeks, and that is causing concern from residents about the safety of the birds. Many people have wondered why the aerators are not working in the Weed Park lagoon and if this is driving the geese out of the park in their search for food and water.

The public is urged to be cautious around these birds and to avoid feeding them, especially during the winter months.

The aerators were removed from the Weed Park lagoon in 2018 as part of a Goose Management Program developed by the City of Muscatine in cooperation with Muscatine County Conservation and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).



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"We were given several options for maintaining the population of the geese by the Iowa DNR," Nick Gow, Superintendent of Parks, said. "We considered all of the options and determined that removing the aerators was what we wanted to try first. Staff is open to further discussion on how to best manage the geese population at the lagoon with the overall goal of providing safety for all in Weed Park."

Management of Canada geese populations in Iowa is under the direction of the Iowa DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 2018, the City of Muscatine consulted with Muscatine County Conservation and the DNR to implement a geese management program at the lagoon in Weed Park. In the years leading up to the winter of 2018, numerous comments and concerns that were made about the high geese population occurring in Weed Park and the surrounding areas, and the mess that was being left on the trail and surrounding areas of the park.

Several options were given to the City of Muscatine including stopping all recreational feeding of the geese, modifying habitats to make them less attractive to geese, harass geese pairs prior to nesting, eliminate or minimize attractive nesting sites, allow urban wetlands to freeze over during the winter, encourage hunting within city limits, and discourage goose use of specific areas by hazing or installing barriers.

City staff determined that the best option would be to allow urban wetlands to freeze over during the winter months. Geese need a source of water during the winter for drinking and feather maintenance, and will concentrate on even small ponds that maintain open water areas with aeration systems or fountains. These concentrations of geese can pose a threat to human health or safety.

The aerators were removed from the lagoon during the winter of 2017/2018, and have not been used since. Parks and Recreation staff believe that the goose management program implemented by the City has been a success with a reduction of the mess left on the trail and surrounding areas of the park.



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According to the Management Guidelines for Controlling Canada Geese published by the DNR, Giant Canada geese find urban environments particularly attractive because these areas have all the habitat elements important to these birds: wetlands surrounded by short grass, harvested crop fields during the fall, winter and spring, low predator populations, and safe, secure loafing sites.

As urbanization increases, the DNR said, Canada goose migration decreases.

“Expansive, manicured lawns and man-made ponds have become new favorite hangouts for these birds,” the DNR said. “Natural predators aren’t very common in these spots, and constructed water areas are often heated and don’t freeze during the winter. Geese love the large grass spaces because they can digest grass and have wide, unobstructed views to keep an eye out for anything coming toward their young. With food, water, and safe places, these geese no longer need to leave during the winter.”

In a story published by Radiolowa, Iowa DNR waterfowl biologist Orrin Jones said that when we toss bread and other treats to these birds it is teaching them to be depending on humans.

“We want to encourage them to find food on their own,” Jones said in the article. “These birds are migratory in nature and it’s very important that they go and distribute, and finding food is part of that migratory process.”

The article was written by Matt Kelley who noted that “as we’ve all learned during the past pandemic year, sometimes being in close proximity to one another is a bad thing, and the same goes for birds, which will cluster around when there’s free food.”

And feeding them can be a critical mistake for the health of the birds.



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"They really need to find natural foods to get a wide range of items in their diet to satisfy their nutritional needs," Jones said in the article. "Human food is oftentimes detrimental and can even be dangerous to these birds so you might actually be harming them by feeding them."

[8 cool things you should know about Canada geese](#) – Iowa DNR

[Waterfowl biologist says don't feed the geese](#) – Radiolowa

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