



# DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



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## Nuisance Canada Geese

Canada geese are a valuable natural resource that provides recreation and enjoyment to bird watchers, hunters, and the general public throughout New York State. But in recent years, flocks of local-nesting or "resident" geese have become year-round inhabitants of our parks, waterways, residential areas, and golf courses, and too often, they are causing significant problems.

In urban and suburban areas throughout New York State, expanses of short grass, abundant lakes and ponds, lack of natural predators, limited hunting, and supplemental feeding have created an explosion in resident goose numbers. While most people find a few geese acceptable, problems develop as local flocks grow. Problems include over-grazed lawns, accumulations of droppings and feathers on play areas and walkways, nutrient loading to ponds, public health concerns at beaches and drinking water supplies, aggressive behavior by nesting birds, and safety hazards near roads and airports. Based on the growing frequency and severity of complaints about geese, DEC biologists have concluded that a more acceptable number of resident geese in New York was at or below 85,000 birds - far fewer than the 2011 population estimate of more than 207,000 birds. However, this is a **long-term statewide population goal** that guides our management programs and policies including establishing hunting seasons and bag limits, and

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allowing additional take of geese by permit.

## Dealing with Nuisance Geese

There are many ways to discourage geese from settling in your area. No single technique is universally effective and socially acceptable. Persistent application of a combination of methods is usually necessary and yields the best results. Detailed information on dealing with nuisance geese is provided in the DEC publication "[When Geese Become a Problem](#)" (PDF) (490 kB). This fact sheet provides general information on Canada geese in New York, and describes the most effective methods currently available to prevent or alleviate problems that geese can cause.

## Permitting Requirements for the Take of Canada Geese in New York

All Canada geese, including resident flocks, are protected by Federal and State laws and regulations. In New York, management responsibility for Canada geese is shared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). It is illegal to hunt, kill, sell, purchase, or possess migratory birds or their parts (feathers, nests, eggs, etc.) except as permitted by regulations adopted by USFWS and DEC.

The circumstances when federal or state permits are needed to address a problem with Canada geese can be complex; however, here are some general guidelines:

- No federal or state permits are needed to scare, herd, or chase away geese by any means, including dogs or noisemakers, as long as no birds are physically harmed.
- If all you want to do is destroy goose nests or



treat the eggs with corn oil (or puncturing) to prevent hatching, simply visit the USFWS's Resident Canada Goose Nest and Egg Registration Site to register on-line (see the Offsite Link in the right-hand column). You do not need any special authorization or permit from DEC.

- If you are a farmer or manager of an airport, beach, or drinking water supply, and you want permission for the lethal removal of geese between May 1 and August 31, you do not need a federal permit but need authorization from your [local DEC Wildlife office](#).
- In most other situations, including areas where geese are a general nuisance (parks, golf courses, residential or commercial properties, etc.), or to kill geese at other times of the year, you need a specific federal permit. A state permit may also be needed if you wish to take more than are allowed under DEC's "General Depredation Permit" (or "GDP"; see PDF file below on permitting requirements and the "GDP").
- DEC generally does not allow relocation of geese with or without a permit.
- For more information, view, print, or download the document below or contact your [local DEC Wildlife office](#). To apply for a federal permit, contact the New York State office of USDA Wildlife Services at (518) 477-4837.

Additional information is provided in the document "[Permit Requirements for Take of Canada Geese and the General Depredation Permit for New York \(PDF\)](#)" (updated March 2012, 106 kB). This document includes: (1) a **fact sheet** that provides general information about state and federal permit requirements to take Canada geese (including nests or eggs); (2) the official version of DEC's **General Depredation Permit (GDP)**, specifying terms and conditions for its use; and (3) a brief **overview of the four federal orders** summarizing the key

aspects of who is eligible and what is allowed.

## **Federal Regulations Associated with the Control of Canada Geese**

The following federal regulations guide management actions that may be taken to deal with nuisance Canada geese. Visit the Links Leaving DEC's Website in the right-hand column to read the full text of the federal regulations.

- 50 CFR Sec. 21.49 Control order for resident Canada geese at airports and military airfields
- 50 CFR Sec. 21.50 Depredation order for resident Canada geese nests and eggs
- 50 CFR Sec. 21.51 Depredation order for resident Canada geese at agricultural facilities
- 50 CFR Sec. 21.52 Public health control order for resident Canada geese

## **More about Nuisance Canada Geese:**

### **Long-term Population Goals for Resident Canada**

**Geese** - In 1999, DEC helped develop a long-term management plan for resident Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway.