

## Native Waterfowl

Native waterfowl refers to ducks, geese, and swans, all of which are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Canada geese are broken into two groups: migratory and resident. Resident Canada geese, while protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, have more options for removal (see Resident Canada Geese section). Mute swans are not native nor are they protected by the State or Federal Government (see Nonnative Birds section).

**What is the common damage caused by waterfowl?** As waterfowl can congregate in large flocks, landowners may become upset about the density of birds in the area or that they are defecating around the property. Birds may also cause damage to lawns or ag fields from foraging. Ducks can become nuisances by staying around and defecating in peoples' pools.

**Can a WCA write a depredation permit?** Outside of the established hunting season, a federal permit must be obtained for waterfowl. The USDA Wildlife Services facilitates the procurement of federal depredation permits through the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia. A state depredation permit is also required. A WCA can write a depredation permit once the federal permit is received.

**Can waterfowl be relocated?** No, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act it is illegal to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird without a federal permit.

**What can I do with sick or injured waterfowl?** There are licensed [rehabilitators](#) across the state that can take in sick or injured waterfowl. Advise the individual to leave the bird alone for 24 hours before contacting a rehabilitator to see if it can recover on its own. If the bird is evading capture (able to swim or fly), it is best to leave the bird alone as repeated capture attempts may overstress the bird and cause further damage.

**Are there any safety concerns?** No, however it is good practice to wear gloves when handling any animal.

### Non-lethal Options:

- Harassment
  - Dogs have been used to harass geese and scare them off individuals' property.
  - Loud noises such as airhorns and whistles can be effective to deter waterfowl from coming into yards. This is most effective if applied as soon as the birds start coming into the area. The longer the birds have been there, the less effective noise deterrents become.
    - There are products advertised to deter bird birds such as propane cannons and bird bangers.
  - Shiny beach balls/ floating objects can be placed on the pool's surface to deter ducks from landing on the water.
  - Lasers can be shined on the ground next to flocks to act as a visual deterrent.
  - There are registered products that can be applied to lawns to deter geese. These products contain the active ingredients methyl anthranilate or anthraquinone. Anthraquinone gives the geese stomach discomfort when they ingest the grass and

methyl anthranilate, found naturally in grapes, acts as a taste deterrent. Products need to be reapplied after it rains.

- Exclusion
  - When birds are molting and cannot fly, fencing can prevent them from getting into the area.
  - For small ponds, netting or wire mesh can be placed over the pond to prevent birds and other animals from having access.
- Landscape modification
  - Waterfowl prefer waterbodies that are open, so they can see when predators are approaching. Planting tall grasses or trees around the water source will make the area less desirable.
  - Using riprap or creating a steep slope along the water source can deter waterfowl as they prefer grassy, gradually sloping areas that make it easy to move from water to land.

#### Lethal Options:

- Waterfowl can be taken during the established hunting season with proper licensing, stamps, and certifications.
- Outside of the hunting season, a federal permit is always required to take waterfowl.
  - The USDA Wildlife Services facilitates the procurement of federal depredation permits through the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia.
  - Active nests (nests with eggs or nestlings) are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and cannot be removed without a federal permit.
- In addition to the federal permit, a state depredation permit is always required.