



For a Better Quality of Life



*The Resident Goose  
A Newcomer to the Urban Landscape*



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## *The Resident Goose A Newcomer to the Urban Landscape*

*The arrival of migrating Canada Geese in the fall, flying in their characteristic V-formations, is a sure sign that winter is on its way and evokes in many a desire to travel south, too. Unfortunately, the damage caused by their cousins, resident Canada geese, to public grounds like parks, marinas and golf courses tarnishes the image of these magnificent birds.*



## A Newcomer

A growing number of resident geese are leaving the United States in spring and spending the summer here. This is a new phenomenon, as the resident goose was not present in southern Québec before.

## History in North America

In the 1950s, resident geese were nearly extinct in their North American range, mainly as a result of overhunting. Breeding programs were set up at that time with the aim of reintroducing geese to these locations. The program was so successful that, today, these birds are causing significant damage to some areas of Canada and the United States. A number of methods are currently being used to control their expansion.



Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)  
Subspecies: giant Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*),  
also known as the resident goose  
Weight: up to 10 kg  
(the migrant goose weighs about 5 kg)

## History in Southern Québec

The first nesting records of resident geese date back to the late 1970s in the Outaouais and the Eastern Townships. Today, these birds are found in the southern part of the province and as far north as Abitibi, Lake Saint-Jean Region and the Gaspé Peninsula. The resident goose population is dramatically increasing as illustrated in the case of Varennes Islands.

Resident geese nests in the Varennes Islands



*We have created a landscape of large, open areas with well manicured lawns and in proximity to water bodies — exactly what resident geese are looking for! What's more, these areas are safe and free from predators and hunters: a dream come true for this bird.*



## The Other Side of the Coin

Who doesn't enjoy the sight of geese waddling around in a park, sharing our green space on a sunny day? Your attitude toward these birds might change, though, if a few geese turned into a gaggle. Some of the problems they bring with them include:

- lawn damage due to geese overgrazing;
- shoreline erosion;
- reduction in the aesthetic quality of sites due to geese droppings;
- health hazards associated with geese droppings;
- possible conflicts between passersby and protective mother geese;
- increased risk of bird-aircraft collisions near airports.

## An Ounce of Prevention

The total number of resident geese in North America is estimated at several million birds. In Canada, the highest population densities are found in Ontario. Although Québec's geese population is not as large, the number of complaints reported is increasing every year, a sign that the geese population is expanding.



The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) is working to limit the growth of the resident goose population and restrict its expansion. They seek to increase awareness among marina, golf club and public land managers, as well as waterfront residents, that it is easier to prevent these birds from settling in than it is to control them once they have already done so. A goose that chooses to spend the summer somewhere will certainly return to that same site the following year, as will its offspring.

*The Canada Goose is a migratory bird protected under Canadian law by the **Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994**. It is illegal to disturb birds during the nesting period. Resident geese adapt quickly to new conditions, including some control methods. It is therefore important to vary control methods to increase the likelihood of success.*

## **SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS**

### ***Do Not Feed the Geese***

Don't even think about feeding them! Resident geese are opportunistic. They usually return to places where food is readily accessible.

### ***Make the Area Inhospitable***

Geese prefer short grass and open areas. Once these characteristics have been modified, the area will no longer be as appealing.

1. Reduce or stop watering and fertilizing lawns. Resident geese prefer to feed on lush, more nourishing grass.
2. Reduce the size of grassy areas by planting trees and shrubs. Resident geese need to be able to see into the distance to feel safe.
3. Let grass grow to 15 cm (6 inches) tall. Long grass is a poorer source of energy for resident geese because it contains more fibre and less protein than short grass.

### ***No Swimming Allowed***

Geese look for water bodies where they can drink, swim and escape from predators. Blocking their access to water by putting up barriers made of wire, rope or vegetation makes the site less attractive to the geese. Such barriers are most effective in spring, before the geese nest, and at the end of summer, during the brood-rearing and moulting periods.

### ***Be a Nuisance***

Various sounds (siren, etc.) and lights (strobe light, etc.) can be effective in repelling resident geese. These techniques should be used at random intervals and combined with other control methods. Because geese are used to being around humans, they tolerate disturbances and noises generated by our daily activities.

An effective deterrent consists of using large, trained dogs to scare the geese away. A dog is left to roam a site, leading the geese to think that a predator is present. The geese will prefer to settle in a safer place. The dog should only scare the birds, not try to pursue or harm them.





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### *When the Hunter's Away, the Geese Flock Together*

Hunting may be used as a control method in areas where it is not generally practised. This will reduce the number of geese that settle in the area that particular year as well as in subsequent years, since these birds will prefer to settle in a quieter spot. It is important, however, to comply with municipal firearm regulations and CWS (Canadian Wildlife Service) migratory bird hunting regulations.

### ***EXCEPTIONAL SOLUTIONS THAT REQUIRE A PERMIT***

**The Canadian Wildlife Service does issue permits, as it deems appropriate and under certain conditions, to control the resident geese population. For more information, contact the CWS, Québec Region, at 1-800-463-4311.**

### *Eggs That Will Never Hatch*

Spraying eggs with mineral oil prevents gas exchange and causes the embryo to die by asphyxiation. Eggs can also be pricked using a long needle or shaken vigorously; both of these methods also stop embryos from developing. The female will continue to brood the eggs for a longer period than is necessary and will not lay any new ones.

### *As a Last Resort*

While firearms may be used to scare or kill resident geese, their use is regulated in urban areas.