

The Harmful Effects of Feeding Waterfowl

Although feeding and interacting with water fowl can be enjoyable, it can also cause long-term health problems for these animals, potential health risks to humans, and environmental degradation. Please enjoy them from a distance and respect their wildness. By doing so you will offer them their best chance at survival.

Wildlife and Habitat Degradation



Concentration



In just days, waterfowl can destroy park landscapes.

Feeding water fowl discourages their natural behavior and can rapidly lead to overpopulation in urban parks. Many of these birds will suffer injury from the aggression and competition that occurs when wildlife become concentrated. High concentrations also cause costly environmental damage to the

landscaping of the park and make it less enjoyable for community members. In addition, bird droppings can increase algae growth in nearby water sources and harm fish populations.

Loss of Natural Behavior



Increasingly our local parks are becoming home to water fowl that are choosing to stay and be fed year round versus going on their natural migration. When left on their own, water fowl will find new areas where food sources are more plentiful. Being fed by humans on a regular basis also causes wildlife to lose their innate fear of humans. Water fowl that keep their natural fear of people have the best chance for survival.



This Canada goose is suffering from the potentially crippling "angel wing" disease, caused by an unnatural diet fed by well-meaning humans.

Serious Health Problems

Angel Wing

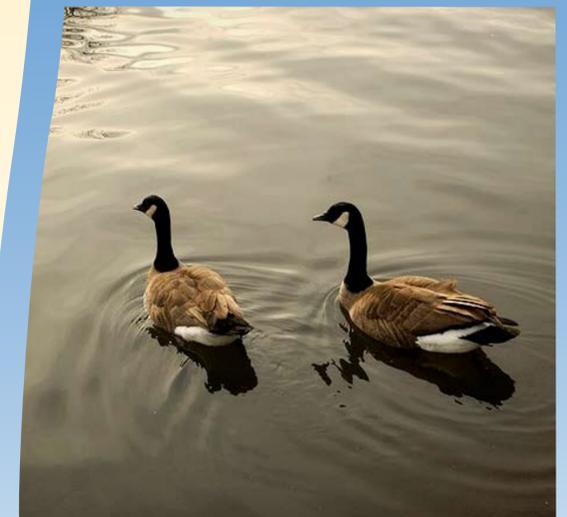
Angel wing is a disease that affects waterfowl, primarily geese and ducks. The condition is acquired by young birds and is believed to be the result of a diet high in carbohydrates from food sources such as bread. Feeding water fowl human foods creates a diet imbalance which causes the feathers of birds to grow so fast that the wings are not able to be supported by the wrist bones and the bones begin to twist outward. In adult birds the disease is incurable and usually leads to an early death as birds are rendered flightless.

To prevent angel wing please help encourage water fowl to seek their own natural sources of food by not feeding them.



Impacts on Human Health

Bird droppings in a concentrated area may create a high concentration of bacteria and parasites in the water which can pose a risk to human health. Geese can also be aggressive during nesting and brood rearing season and have been known to bite or chase people.



Portions of this text were taken from the Massachusetts Audubon Society's article "Feeding Waterfowl."



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