Birdwatchers and the general public enjoy watching Canada geese, ducks, and other waterfowl—all valuable natural resources. In many areas of the country, however, populations of nonmigrating, or resident, Canada geese and ducks are increasing dramatically.

These birds require fresh water for resting and nesting and tender young grass and other succulent vegetation for food. The plentiful, well-manicured lawns of residential neighborhoods, corporate business areas, parks, airports, and golf courses provide excellent habitat. Geese, especially, can easily become accustomed to people and residential areas.

Although most people find a few birds acceptable, problems quickly develop as bird numbers increase. These problems include: overgrazing of grass and ornamental plants; accumulation of droppings and feathers; attacks on humans by aggressive birds; and the fouling of reservoirs, swimming areas, docks, lawns, and recreational areas. Flocks of geese and other waterfowl also feed on a variety of crops, including corn, soybeans, rice, lettuce, winter wheat, barley, and rye. Additionally, the feeding of waterfowl by humans may contribute to conflicts with humans.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and State laws protect all native waterfowl in the United States, including migratory and resident Canada geese. Under these laws, it is illegal to hunt, kill, sell, purchase, or possess migratory birds except as permitted by regulations enforced by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Individuals can conduct some management techniques independently, but wildlife professionals should carry out most waterfowl management activities. Individuals should consult with WS or a State wildlife agency.

A Wildlife Services biologist applies corn oil to a goose egg. This treatment prevents eggs from developing and reduces the potential for re-nesting.
An integrated approach will discourage waterfowl from residing in areas where overabundant flocks cause problems.
hatchability and production in all bird species, only licensed wildlife specialists or pest control operators are permitted to buy and use OvoControl® in those States where it is registered. For more information, please read WS’ OvoControl Q&A Factsheet.

- Capture and remove. Capture and removal by humane euthanasia can allow the above management methods to be more effective in the future. Community involvement is an important part of this decision. Trained individuals, including WS, can carry out the operation only with required permits.

- Hunting. Where it is safe and legal, hunting can be used to control some species of residential waterfowl. A State wildlife management agency can provide local laws and regulations.

- Obtain depredation permit. After applying some of the listed techniques over an extended period with little to no success, a depredation permit can be requested. Shooting a few birds each day may improve the effectiveness of harassment. Shooting may be impractical and/or prohibited in most urban damage situations, due to safety concerns, local noise and discharge ordinances, and adjacent land uses. Federal and/or State permits are required. For more information on obtaining a depredation permit contact the State USDA–WS office.

**Capture, Relocation, or Removal**

In special instances, WS may capture urban waterfowl using live-traps or tranquilizers, such as alphachloralose, and relocate them. Many States discourage the relocation of waterfowl within their borders because of the potential to create problems elsewhere in the State. Canada geese instinctively try to return to areas where they were born and raised and should be moved at least 200 miles away from their nesting site.

Reduction of the local waterfowl population, particularly resident Canada geese, can be accomplished by capture and removal. Federal and some States’ regulations may permit the capture and removal of resident Canada geese between April 1 and August 31. Geese are most easily corralled during the molting period when they lose their primary flight feathers, leaving them flightless. From mid-June through early-July, the waterfowl can be captured with netted panel traps.

Capture/removal can allow other management methods to be more effective in the future. Community involvement is an important part of this decision.

Once captured, the geese are crated and euthanized. Under permit conditions, euthanized geese are then buried, incinerated, or donated as a food source to charitable organizations. Donated carcasses must be processed according to State guidelines. Euthanization of captured geese should be conducted by trained individuals. WS follows recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

**Additional Information**

For more information about managing waterfowl damage and WS, please call 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297) or visit the Web site at: www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/.