

In response to Mill Creek MetroParks' decision to conduct a goose roundup, the following information is provided to address the questions, concerns, opinions, and misinformation regarding our goose management program.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is Canada goose management necessary?

- Along with the MetroParks' top priority for the health and safety of our visitors, the management of natural resources, habitats and wildlife is something that we take very seriously. The number of geese residing in Mill Creek Park has negatively impacted the habitats in certain areas through trampling, overgrazing, and eroding of banks. Feeding of geese by park visitors also attracts the birds into unnatural concentrations which can negatively impact the health of the geese.
- Canada geese have thrived in human-altered landscapes, including urban parks, residential areas, golf courses, and airports. They are attracted by the maintained lawn areas with nearby water bodies, and relative safety from predators. According to ODNR, "Canada geese are probably the most adaptable and tolerant of all native waterfowl. If left undisturbed, they will readily establish nesting territories on any suitable pond, be it located on a farm, backyard, golf course, apartment or condominium complex, or city park. Most people will welcome and start feeding the first pair of geese on their pond, but these geese will soon wear out their welcome. In just a few years, a pair of geese can easily become 50 to 100 birds. The feces will foul the areas around the pond and surrounding yards and also damage the lawn, pond, and other vegetation. Geese that are fed will lose their fear of humans and attack adults, children, and pets during the nesting season."
- Since being thought extinct in the mid-20th century, the "giant" type of Canada goose that resides in Mill Creek Park has made a comeback thanks to restoration efforts which introduced giant Canada geese into Ohio and many other states. The population of giant Canada geese in Ohio is estimated to be over 140,000, well over the statewide goal of 60,000.

2. When did the MetroParks begin Canada goose management activities?

- The MetroParks has been implementing measures to discourage geese from congregating in targeted problem areas since 2010. Signage, literature, and efforts to educate the public on why they should not feed geese pre-date these other activities.

3. What Canada goose management activities were performed prior to the roundup?

- The MetroParks has attempted and implemented most of the methods recommended by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), the Humane Society, and other organizations. These include:
 - Hazing
 - Pyrotechnics
 - Reflective flash tape
 - Predator decoys
 - Blinking lights
 - Lasers
 - Dogs
 - Habitat modifications
 - Changing mowing frequency in certain locations
 - Allowing some areas to naturalize
 - Adding landscape plantings
 - Installing wire fencing
 - Signage, literature, and staff explaining "do not feed the wildlife" rules
 - Egg addling (with permit from ODNR)

4. What is "egg addling" and why do you do it?

- Egg addling is the process of treating a goose egg to stop its development into a gosling. It can only be performed with a permit from ODNR. The MetroParks has been performing egg addling every spring

since 2011. Adding eggs decreases the rate of growth of the local goose population by limiting the number of goslings.

- Beginning in March, MetroParks staff survey known nesting areas to monitor when nesting begins and eggs are laid.
- Geese lay an average of 2 - 10 eggs.
- Incubation begins once all eggs are laid and usually lasts 28 - 30 days.
- Eggs are added per ODNR recommended technique
- MetroParks staff only adds eggs that are early on in the development process.

5. How effective were the goose management activities you've implemented?

- The activities listed above have had varying levels of success:
 - Geese in many parts of Mill Creek Park are so used to being around people, cars, and other distractions that they are not fooled by most of the passive scare devices (reflective tape, predator decoys, etc.).
 - While a dog is housed and used to chase geese at the Wick Recreation Area, the use of dogs around the lakes of Mill Creek Park has proven not effective due to the layout of the sites and the easy access to water for the geese (if geese can reach water they feel very safe and do not abandon the area).
 - Pyrotechnics have shown some success, however it is difficult to get the geese to leave a site as they feel safe swimming away from the flares.
 - Habitat modification, particularly allowing previously mown sites to naturalize, has succeeded in discouraging geese from certain areas, but these modifications and naturalized shorelines are not feasible in all areas of Mill Creek Park that are experiencing damage and degradation from the geese.
 - The sheer number of geese and the concentration of geese in certain areas meant that our management efforts were generally unsuccessful in meeting goals.

6. Why did the goose roundup have to occur?

- The decision to perform a goose roundup was made because the population of geese in certain areas of Mill Creek Park had grown to the point that it was negatively impacting the habitats. The concentrated population also poses a health concern with the potential spread of disease and parasites between the birds and possibly from the birds to people. Geese in Mill Creek Park have lost their fear of humans and many act aggressively when begging for food or protecting their nests and young. Geese in other parts of Mill Creek Park or other MetroParks properties do not typically behave in this manner.
- Geese are attracted to developed park areas with short grass, access to water, and few predators. Mill Creek Park, as a developed public space, provides this perfect goose habitat. It is unfortunate that it came to this, but with the population reduced the MetroParks can continue the management efforts described above to prevent the problem from recurring.

7. Who made the decision to perform a goose roundup?

- As with all aspects of our Canada goose management program, Mill Creek MetroParks staff consulted with wildlife specialists at ODNR and other park districts in the region. The roundup was the next step as recommended by MetroParks natural resources management staff and ODNR.

8. What would happen if a roundup was not performed?

- Due to a lack of predators, and the fact that geese are attracted to areas maintained for human recreation (such as the developed areas of Mill Creek Park), the local population inhabiting these areas would continue to increase. This circumstance would continue to cause conflicts with human and other uses of the Park through increased fecal deposits, damage to habitats, possible public health concerns, etc. MetroParks' nonlethal methods of management would continue to be ineffective.

9. How often do Canada goose roundups occur in Ohio?

- ODNR typically issues 40 to 50 roundup permits annually. ODNR does not issue permits for roundups without ensuring there is a need and documenting that the landowner is attempting other methods such

as those already outlined. Permittees typically include city and metropolitan park districts, airports, and agricultural landowners.

10. I heard the permit only allowed a certain number of geese to be rounded up. Is this correct?

- No. There is no minimum or maximum number of geese or goslings specified in the permit from ODNR. Geese that are present in target areas during the roundup may be removed. A typical roundup will involve 50 - 75 geese. Due to the severity of the problem in Mill Creek Park, the number of geese exceeded the anticipated totals.

11. Was the Canada goose roundup legal?

- Yes. The MetroParks followed ODNR's comprehensive management plan by using multiple harassment tactics prior to seeking a permit for the roundup. We were authorized by ODNR to conduct the roundup.

12. Are Canada geese a federally protected species?

- Yes. Canada geese are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and regulated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In addition to the geese themselves, their nests, eggs, feathers, and parts are all protected. In Ohio the USFWS has delegated authority to regulate and manage Canada geese to ODNR. This is why any actions that will disturb goose nests or kill geese in Ohio require permits from ODNR and not USFWS.

13. Why were the geese not relocated?

- ODNR does not permit anyone (public or private) to relocate Canada geese. In the early 1990's ODNR conducted a study on relocating Canada geese from conflict situations and found that 60% of the relocated geese returned to areas with goose conflict problems within 1 year and 70% of the relocated geese were in conflict situations within 3 years. For more information, contact ODNR.

14. How were the geese euthanized?

- The geese were humanely euthanized using carbon dioxide gas. This method is recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), which determines and maintains guidelines for humane euthanasia methods.
- Please note that carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas is different from carbon monoxide (CO) gas. Carbon dioxide is a natural by-product of human and animal respiration and occurs naturally in the atmosphere. Carbon monoxide results from oxygen-starved combustion in improperly ventilated fuel-burned equipment and does not occur naturally in the atmosphere. Reports that engine exhaust was utilized in the euthanasia of the geese are false.

15. Is this animal cruelty?

- No. Geese were euthanized per AVMA's recommendations for humane euthanasia, and the roundup was performed legally under the oversight of ODNR. All Canada goose roundups performed in Ohio utilize AVMA recommended euthanasia methods.

16. Why did you not shoot the geese?

- The safety of staff and MetroParks visitors is a priority, therefore we did not opt to shoot the geese.

17. Why was the meat not donated?

- Since geese are highly mobile and will fly in and out of multiple locations to feed, no one can be sure to what the resident geese in Mill Creek Park have been exposed. For example, even though resident geese in Mill Creek Park do not migrate, they do come and go from the Park to graze. Therefore, there are concerns that resident Canada geese in urban parks such as Mill Creek Park may be contaminated with various chemicals or toxins present on the plants they eat such as pesticides, fertilizers, or industrial chemicals.

18. How are geese in Mill Creek Park different from those in other parts of the MetroParks?

- Most of the geese in Mill Creek Park are considered to be “urbanized” resident geese. This means that they do not migrate and have lost their fear of humans. They have adapted to living with people, cars, pets, and other distractions that are present in developed areas. They are less likely to respond to many of the nonlethal management methods, such as the use of scare devices, and tend to be more aggressive when begging for food or defending their nests/young. Geese residing in other MetroParks properties are much more timid and will keep a distance from approaching humans.

19. Why do resident Canada geese not migrate?

- Resident Canada geese do not migrate because they do not have to. Mill Creek Park provides them with the short grass they want to eat and the easy access to waterways for safety. In developed urban park areas, geese have very few predators. In addition, there are people feeding them, which is a major contributing factor to the large population of resident geese in Mill Creek Park.

20. How does feeding geese contribute to the problem?

- Feeding geese causes them to alter their behavior – they lose their fear of humans and view humans as a source for food. These geese congregate in larger numbers than they naturally would, which increases the potential for disease to spread among the birds. Their close proximity to people when being fed also increases the potential for bites or other injuries, and even disease or parasite transmission to humans. With each goose producing 1-3 pounds of excrement each day, the high concentration of geese adds a large amount of fecal matter to Mill Creek Park areas and waterways. This is not only unsightly, but highly unsanitary.

21. Why were the Lily Pond, Lake Glacier, and Newport Wetlands Picnic Area targeted?

- These target areas consist of developed parkland and are not natural habitats. Canada goose management is undertaken to meet human needs and performed with consideration for both the human and wildlife components. These areas were experiencing the most degradation and negative impacts from the Canada goose overpopulation. These are also the areas where humans and geese interact, typically through unauthorized feeding. There are geese present throughout Mill Creek Park (and on other MetroParks properties), and geese outside of the target areas were not rounded up.

22. Why was the public not informed about the roundup prior to it occurring?

- Canada goose management in Mill Creek Park is an ongoing, multi-year, multi-faceted program. The roundup was the next recommended step and was implemented without public notice or forum, as was all of the previous steps, such as the use of pyrotechnics or egg addling.

23. Why were tax dollars used for this roundup?

- All MetroParks operational and management activities are funded with tax dollars.

24. Are there plans for another goose roundup at Mill Creek MetroParks?

- Mill Creek MetroParks has no plans for a future goose roundup. Our previous goose management activities were not successful due to the population size and concentration of many geese in small areas. With a more manageable population size, our nonlethal goose management activities will have a greater potential for success in diminishing conflicts.

25. Why did the MetroParks not educate or enforce the “Do Not Feed the Wildlife” rule?

- The MetroParks did educate and enforce the “Do Not Feed the Wildlife” rule. In addition to police/staff education and enforcement of the rule, the MetroParks has educated visitors through signage, informational brochures (distributed and available at MetroParks facilities), TV and radio public service announcements, and programming focused on why it is harmful to the animals and Mill Creek Park.