



# Report on the Canada Goose Population in Mill Creek Park



Eagle with gosling at the sanctuary

Prepared by the Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley

June 28, 2017

This report is being provided to the Mill Creek Board of Commissioners as a result of the motion passed by the board authorizing the Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley to census the Canada Goose population in the park.

This report will provide background information on Canada Geese, population numbers for the geese in the main park property as well as data on Canada Geese at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, Preserve, golf course, and in Mahoning County as a whole.

### Background

Canada Geese were known as migrant and winter visitors before 1950 (Birds of Ohio, Peterjohn 1989). The sight of a flock of Canada Geese was reason to stop and observe them since they were so rare.

During the early 1960s, The Ohio Division of Wildlife began a program to establish a resident population of Canada Geese. The closest introduction was in Trumbull County at the Mosquito Wildlife Area.

These efforts were very successful and breeding pairs began to spread throughout the state. The Division of Wildlife continued their efforts well into the 1980s. This is one of the most successful introduction efforts ever undertaken by the state.

Canada Geese are known to occupy every county in the state and they are regarded as a native species since they did occur historically in the state during migration.

Canada Goose pairs mate for life. They typically nest on the ground adjacent to a pond or lake. The nests are made of dry grass and are lined with down feathers. Nests with eggs can occur as early as March 29, but most are observed between April 10 and April 30<sup>th</sup>. The young normally hatch before May 10<sup>th</sup>. The young geese take 8 to 9 weeks to reach flight capabilities. Resident Canada Geese normally only nest once per year and the young typically stay with their parents during the first year. Geese maintain a small territory around their nest sites and they aggressively defend the nests.

Geese are very adaptable and have taken to manmade and altered habitat. This is where the trouble starts. Geese like short cut grass and being able to see approaching predators. Habitat modification around lakes is sometimes problematic because people associate long grass with unmaintained areas. Urban geese have no fear of humans since they do not pose a threat. Hunting in urban areas is impractical so the geese learn they have a safe haven. People also enjoy feeding geese and this can lead to conflicts between people and geese.

So what to do? There is a great deal of published information on how to control Canada Geese available on the internet. I can supply information to the best sources available if requested.

Adult geese do not have many predators but nests and nestlings are very susceptible to predation. Predators such as fox, coyote, raccoons, Bald Eagles, and snapping turtles are just a few of the critters that will eat eggs and nestlings. These animals are all found in Mill Creek Park and the wildlife sanctuary.

Finally, I have done an exhaustive literature search at both the National Institutes of Health and the Center for Disease Control for information on diseases related to humans and geese. An NIH study from 2001 concludes that "Definitive Links to human infectious diseases have been difficult to prove."(NIH Nov.2001 pg 676 - 684).

## Abundance and Population of Canada Geese

This section will provide information on the population of Canada Geese in Ohio and locally.

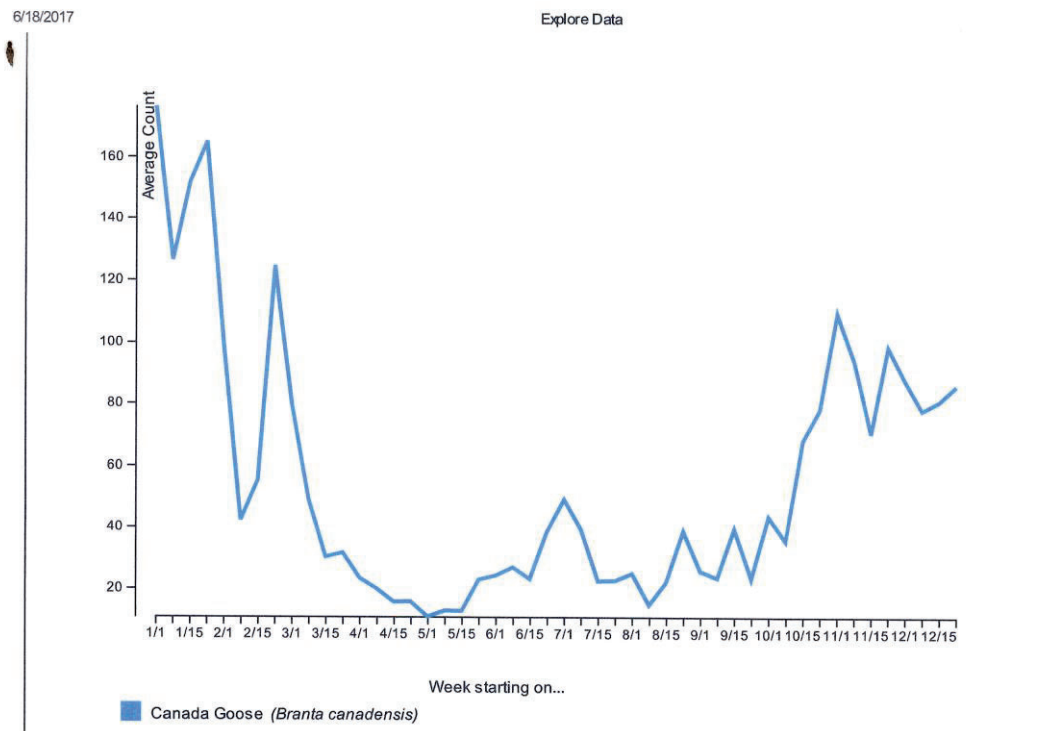
Statewide the population of breeding Canada Geese is estimated to be 105,000 per the data derived from *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Ohio*. Ohio Division of Wildlife aerial surveys estimate the population to be 110,300 - 140,700 birds. These birds are very common and their population stability is not a concern to scientists. The “safe dates” to insure you are only counting resident and not migrating geese were established by the breeding bird coordinators to be May 31 to July 31<sup>st</sup>. We selected June 26<sup>th</sup> as our count day.

In Mahoning County and Mill Creek Park the only population data comes from citizen scientist eBird reports. eBird is a reporting site developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Thousands of birders throughout the state report their sightings to this site. Unfortunately, data for the main lakes in the park, Lakes Newport, Cohasset and Glacier are statistically unreliable because of the small sample size. Less than 50 bird checklists have been submitted for these lakes. During harassment, park personnel count the geese (source: records request) so this could add some more data points.

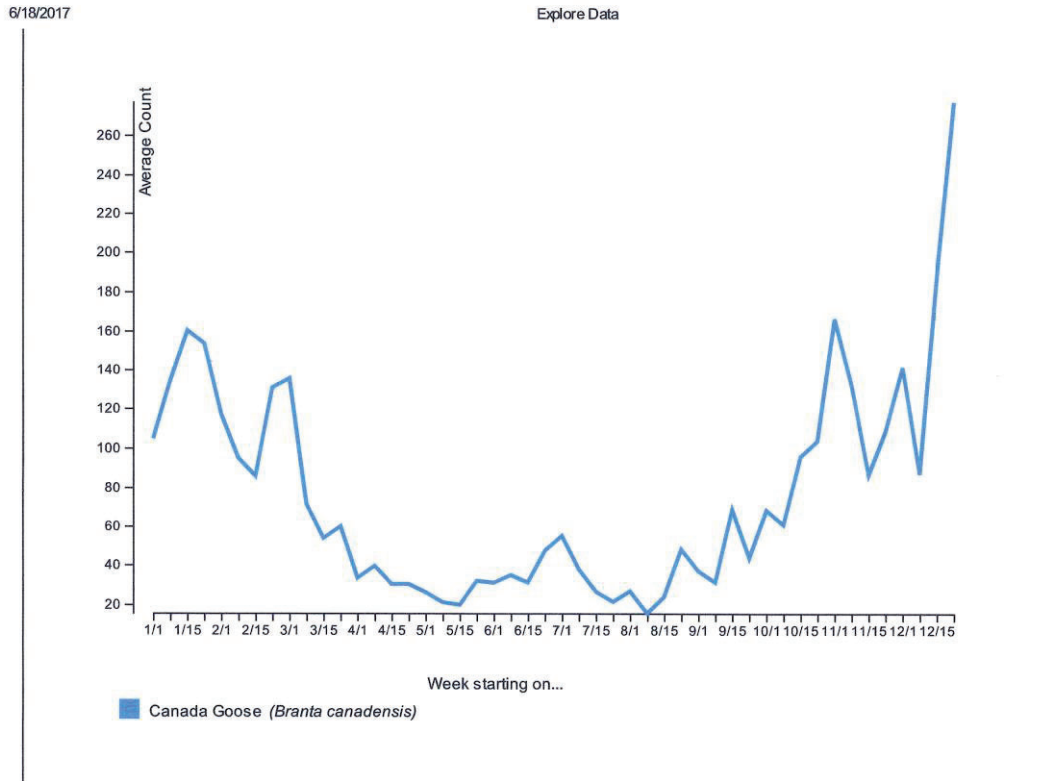
Without accurate count data over time, you will only be guessing as to whether your efforts to control geese are working.

### Mahoning County and Mill Creek Park

4,266 check lists have been submitted for Mahoning County. The data derived from these checklists show how the Canada Geese population varies throughout the year. The “average count” is the number of geese that appeared on a checklist reporting geese. The following graph shows that the highest numbers of Canada Geese reported on submitted checklists peak during the winter months when resident geese are joined by migrants. The numbers then decrease over the year with a smaller peak during the week of July 1<sup>st</sup> when nesting has ended and the surviving chicks are included in the count. Numbers then drop as survival rates decline until the fall migration begins and the number of geese climbs.



The Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary is the only park property that has been continuously surveyed for the past 10 years. The data collected on 1,029 checklists mirrors the county data on fewer checklists submitted as shown on the following graph. It is included here because the park continues to do Canada Goose nest destruction on the property.



In 2016, the park staff began its goose harassment in March and continued until March 20<sup>th</sup>. The maximum number of geese recorded was 66 geese on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. This year the goose harassment program began on 2/28 and continued through 4/2. The maximum number of geese recorded during the period was 76 on the evening of March 15<sup>th</sup>. At the conclusion of the harassment, the number of geese being counted were 46 on April 12, 2017 (source: records request).

The park staff applied for a permit from the Ohio Division of Wildlife on March 15, 2017 to addle eggs and/or destroy nests. The application stated that the geese in Mill Creek were providing excess feces, degraded water quality, were aggressive, destroying property and were a traffic hazard. The park also remarked that people were still feeding the geese but at a lesser rate. This should be addressed more forcefully.

The application stated that abatement tactics were being used to harass the geese. I could find no information that showed harassment tactics were being used at the sanctuary. Almost all of the tactics were employed in the main park (source: public records request).

The reports from USDA on their nest destruction activities showed the following number of nests were located and treated. The data requested was for the time frame 2010 - 2017. The following information was all that was included in a public records request response. I can only examine what is provided.

	2014	2016	2017
Newport wetlands	37	35	31
Lake Glacier	2	2	2
Lake Cohasset	6	0	1
Lilly Pond	3	0	0
Wildlife Sanctuary	4	31	23

The Newport wetland area had the highest concentration of geese nests during the three years with data.

Canada Geese at the Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary pose no threat as far as we can tell and the efforts to control them on this property should be reexamined. This is a location known as a wildlife sanctuary with very little public access.

2017 Goose Survey

On June, 26, 2017, the Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley members and other volunteers met and counted all the geese in the main park. Three teams were assigned various locations in the park. The count started at 8:00 a.m. and took approximately 90 minutes.

**146** Canada Geese were located in the main park. The number of geese was higher than we would have expected with all the effort taken to control the population.

Newport wetlands	53
Lake Newport	25
Lake Cohasset	0
Lilly Pond	0
Lake Glacier	68

Total **146** A total 16 juvenile geese and 6 goslings were included in the count.

We also surveyed the sanctuary, preserve and golf course during the count week. The sanctuary had 25 geese, the preserve 0 and the golf course 0.

One survey, thus one data point, does not allow for any conclusions about whether the population is declining or increasing. The Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley will continue to survey the geese over the next two years as outlined in the board's request.

The more data, the better decisions can be made and the wise use of limited resources can be directed to the areas of most concern. This should have the biggest impact on the goose population.

## Summary and Recommendations

The lack of reliable count data makes it difficult to assess what is happening to the Canada Goose population in Mill Creek Park. The park could start a citizen science program asking the public to count the geese and submit their numbers to eBird.

We know that on June 26, 2014 the park had 238 geese removed from the main park. This process left a small amount of geese in the park. (As determined by casual observations after the geese were removed.)

This year, three years later, **146** geese were counted in the main park on the same date. Yearly surveys will allow us to evaluate the population in the park with more accuracy.

The park should direct all of its goose management efforts to reducing the size of its resident flock so that a goose round-up – a public relations disaster – will be prevented.

We would recommend that the geese at the sanctuary be left to the predators and that all efforts be directed at a longer more comprehensive harassment program and a more intensive egg adding program in the main park. I have seen where other metroparks have a “report a goose nest” program. This would allow the public to participate in the identification of nest locations and feel connected to the park.

The “do not feed the wildlife” program must continue and be reinforced.

The Newport Wetlands are a problem area. The highest concentration of nests and geese are found in this area. The park staff should consider evaluating this area and see if any habitat enhancements could be made to reduce this area’s attractiveness to the geese. The experts on the wildlife committee may also have recommendations on how to reduce the nesting geese in this area.

If the board would like any of the supporting documents used in this report, I can make them available to you. If you have any questions please let me know.

Submitted by,

Jeff Harvey  
President  
Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley

The following individuals contributed to this report: Anne Kravitz, Trish Guenther, Ray Novotny, Nancy Brundage, Bettyann Nagy, Kathleen Paull, Jeff Harvey and John Petruzzi.

# MILL CREEK PARK

## 2018 CANADA GOOSE POPULATION COUNT

This report is being provided to the Mill Creek Board of Commissioners as a result of the motion passed by the board authorizing the Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley to census the Canada Goose populations in the park for 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, has been working with the park since 2013 to help manage the Canada goose population. Methods including harassment, egg adding/nest destruction and banding of geese to monitor them has been employed. A full report is available online but I am including only a summary of their findings of nests and egg counts.

Table 1. A comparison of the number of Canada goose nests located and the number of eggs treated on Mill Creek MetroParks owned and managed property, 2013-2018.

Year	2013-2017 AVG		2017		2018	
	Nest	Eggs	Nest	Eggs	Nest	Eggs
Newport Wetlands	33	156.5	28	114	34	208
Lily Pond	0.5	3	0	0	0	0
Lake Cohasset	1.5	7	2	5	1	5
Lake Glacier	1	6.5	2	13	2	12
Wildlife Sanctuary	13.5	67.5	20	111	18	111
Other**	0.5	3	1	6	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>242.5</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>342</b>

\*\* A Canada goose nest was treated at a Mill Creek MetroParks maintenance building that is not depicted on the included maps.

On June 25, 2018 at 8AM, three teams of Audubon Member performed the 2nd annual goose count survey for Mill Creek Park. Included in this this report is the count from 2017 at each location.

Site	2017 count	2018 count
Newport Wetlands	53	42
Newport Lake	25	19
Lily Pond	0	0
Lake Cohasset	0	1
Lake Glacier	68	68 (62 adults, 6 goslings)
Wildlife Sanctuary	25	29
N. End of Bike Trail	no data	9
Daffodil Meadow	no data	0
Golf Course	0	0
Preserve	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>168</b>

In conclusion, after the second year of Audubon collecting this data, with only a minor change in the goose population and a count of only 6 goslings, it is our opinion that adding of the eggs has been effective. But because habitat features attracting Canada geese are found on MetroParks properties, it is realistic to expect that geese will continue to utilize these areas. We are also in agreement with the Wildlife Services suggestions to continue goose harassment, egg adding/nest destruction, and enforcement of no feeding of geese or other waterfowl.

Submitted by  
 Bettyann Nagy  
 Audubon Board Member  
 Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley

The following individuals contributed to this report. Trish Guenther, Ray Novotny, Nancy Brundage, Katie Shipka, Jeff Harvey.



# 2019 Canada Goose Population Count

On the mornings of June 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Audubon members performed the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual goose count survey for Mill Creek Park. Included in this report is the count from 2017 and 2018 at each location.

Site	2017 count	2018 count	2019 count
Newport Wetlands	53	42	0
Newport Lake	25	19	85
Lily Pond	0	0	0
Lake Cohasset	0	1	0
Lake Glacier	68	68 (62 adults, 6 goslings)	53 (50 adults, 3 goslings)
Wildlife Sanctuary	25	29	22
N. End of Bike Trail	no data	9	0
Daffodil Meadow	no data	0	0
Golf Course	0	0	0
Preserve	0	0	0
TOTAL	171	168	160

In conclusion, after the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Audubon collecting this data, with only a minor change in the goose population, it is our opinion that adding of the eggs has been effective. But because habitat features attracting Canada geese are found on MetroParks properties, it is realistic to expect that geese will continue to utilize these areas. We are also in agreement with the Wildlife Services suggestions to continue goose harassment, egg adding/nest destruction, and enforcement of no feeding of geese or other waterfowl.

Submitted by

Bettyann Nagy

Audubon Board Member

Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley

The following individuals contributed to this report: Trish Guenther, Ray Novotny, Nancy

Brundage, Katie Shipka, Jeff Harvey

# MILL CREEK PARK

## 2020 CANADA GOOSE POPULATION COUNT

This report is being provided to the Mill Creek Board of Commissioners as a result of the motion passed by the board authorizing the Audubon Society/Mahoning Valley to census the Canada goose populations in the park for 2017, 2018 and 2019. It was requested by the Board for Audubon to extend the count into the year 2020.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services, has been working with the park since 2013 to help manage the Canada goose population. Methods including harassment, egg addling/nest destruction and banding of geese to monitor them has been employed. A full report is available online but I am including only a summary of their findings of nests and egg counts.

Table1. A comparison of the number of Canada goose nests located and the number of eggs treated on Mill Creek Metro Parks owned and managed property, 2018-2020.

**Table 1. A comparison of the number of active Canada goose nests located and the number of eggs treated on MCMP owned and managed property, 2018-2020.**

Year	2018		2019		2020	
	Nest	Eggs	Nest	Eggs	Nest	Eggs
Newport Wetlands	34	208	32	162	31	137
Lily Pond Lake	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cohasset Lake	1	5	0	0	2	10
Glacier Wildlife Sanctuary	2	12	2	11	1	7
Wildlife Sanctuary	18	111	21*	111*	10*	40*
Other**	1	6	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Found</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Total Treated</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>34*</b>	<b>173*</b>	<b>34*</b>	<b>154*</b>

\*Nest treatments did not occur at the Wildlife Sanctuary for the 2019/2020 season, figures are presented here for comparative purposes only.

## **2021 Audubon Goose Count**

Monday June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Conducted by Bettyann Nagy, Nancy Brundage, and Jeff Harvey



Location	# of Adult Geese	# of Juvenile Geese
Confluence of the Mahoning River & Mill Creek	0	0
Lake Glacier	27	9
Lake Cohasset	11	0
Lake Newport	56	0
Newport Wetlands	14	2
Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	15	0
Mill Creek Golf Course	0	0

Year	Total # of Geese
2021	151
2020	206
2019	160
2018	168
2017	171

## **2022 Audubon Goose Count**

Monday July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Conducted by Bettyann Nagy, Nancy Brundage, and Jeff Harvey



Location	# of Adult Geese	# of Juvenile Geese
Confluence of the Mahoning River & Mill Creek	0	0
Lake Glacier	65	0
Lake Cohasset	13	0
Lake Newport	67	0
Newport Wetlands	30	2
Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary	17	0
Mill Creek Golf Course	0	0

Year	Total # of Geese
2022	192
2021	151
2020	206
2019	160
2018	168
2017	171

## 2023 AUDUBON GOOSE COUNT FOR MILL CREEK PARK

On June 26 and June 28 a Canada Goose count was conducted by Audubon to help evaluate the effectiveness of the annual goose management of nests and eggs by Wildlife Services of the United States Department of Agriculture for Mill Creek MetroPark. Between March 13 and June 1st, Wildlife Services conducted 16 visits to the park and performed egg addling and the nest surveys were documented.

### Wildlife Services 2023 count:

Nests	Eggs	
17	104	Newport Wetlands
0	0	Lily Pond
1	6	Lake Cohasset
3	13	Lake Glacier
2	15	Yellow Creek
9*	45*	Wildlife Sanctuary
32	183	Total Located
23*	138*	Total Treated

### Audubon Count

Newport Wetlands	50
Lily Pond	0
Lake Cohasset	14
Lake Glacier	77 (30 at Glacier and 47 at Slippery Rock) (10 of the SR count were juveniles)
Yellow Creek	Not done
Wildlife Sanctuary	71
Total Count	222

Year	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
# of geese	192	151	206	160	168

## 2024 AUDUBON GOOSE COUNT FOR MILL CREEK METROPARKS

On June 25 a Canada Goose count was conducted by the Audubon Society-Mahoning Valley to help evaluate the effectiveness of the annual goose management of nests and eggs by Wildlife Services of the United States Department of Agriculture for Mill Creek MetroParks. Between April 15 and May 31, 2024, WS conducted a total of 7 site visits to Mill Creek MetroParks property and performed egg addling.

### Audubon Count

Newport Wetlands 27

Newport Lake 67

Lily Pond 0

Lake Cohasset 2 Adults, 4 juveniles (total 6)

Lake Glacier 62 Adults, 8 juveniles, 8 goslings (total 78)

Wildlife Sanctuary 79

Total 257

Year	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
# of geese	222	192	151	206	160	168

### Wildlife Services 2024 count:

Nests	Eggs	
9	33	Newport Wetlands
0	0	Lily Pond
2	8	Cohasset Lake
1	5	Glacier Lake
1*	7*	Wildlife Sanctuary (Nests not treated, numbers are for comparative purposes only)

## 2025 AUDUBON GOOSE COUNT FOR MILL CREEK METROPARKS

On June 21 & 23 a Canada Goose count was conducted by the Audubon Society-Mahoning Valley to help evaluate the effectiveness of the annual goose management of nests and eggs by Wildlife Services of the United States Department of Agriculture for Mill Creek MetroParks. Between March 28 and May16, 2025, WS conducted a total of 8 site visits to MCMP and performed egg addling.

### AUDUBON COUNT

	Adults	Juveniles
Newport Wetlands	0	0
Newport Lake	45	0
Lily Pond	6	13
Lake Cohasset	9	7
Lake Glacier	27	4
Wildlife Sanctuary	38	0

TOTAL 157

YEAR	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
# of geese	257	222	192	151	206	160	168

### WILDLIFE SERVICES 2025 COUNT

NESTS	EGGS	
17	84	Newport Wetlands (includes Lake Newport)
0	0	Lily Pond
2	10	Lake Cohasset
3	9	Lake Glacier
0	0	Wildlife Sanctuary (no nests found)
1	7	Yellow Creek (no treatments during 2021 and 2024 seasons)
23 nests	110 eggs	TOTAL

Thank you to Jeff Harvey, Meg Glines and Trish Guenther for assisting in the count.  
Bettyann Nagy