

discouraged, for those who insist anyways, it is far preferable to feed foods consistent with a natural diet such as cracked corn or triple-duty game-bird chow.

5. Feeding waterfowl can lead to disease among waterfowl populations. Feeding of waterfowl can lead to aggressive behavior towards humans, especially among geese. Unconsumed bread and other "human foods" remain on the ground as nothing more than unsightly litter. Finally, waterfowl habituated to human handouts are more likely to take up residence and less likely to be successfully driven away from locations such as golf courses where they may not be welcomed by the human occupants. When such conflicts occur, it is inevitably the wildlife that loses in the end.

**Portions of this document taken from Massachusetts Audubon Society "Feeding Waterfowl" article.



Photo © Don Baccus



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Living with Urban Wildlife

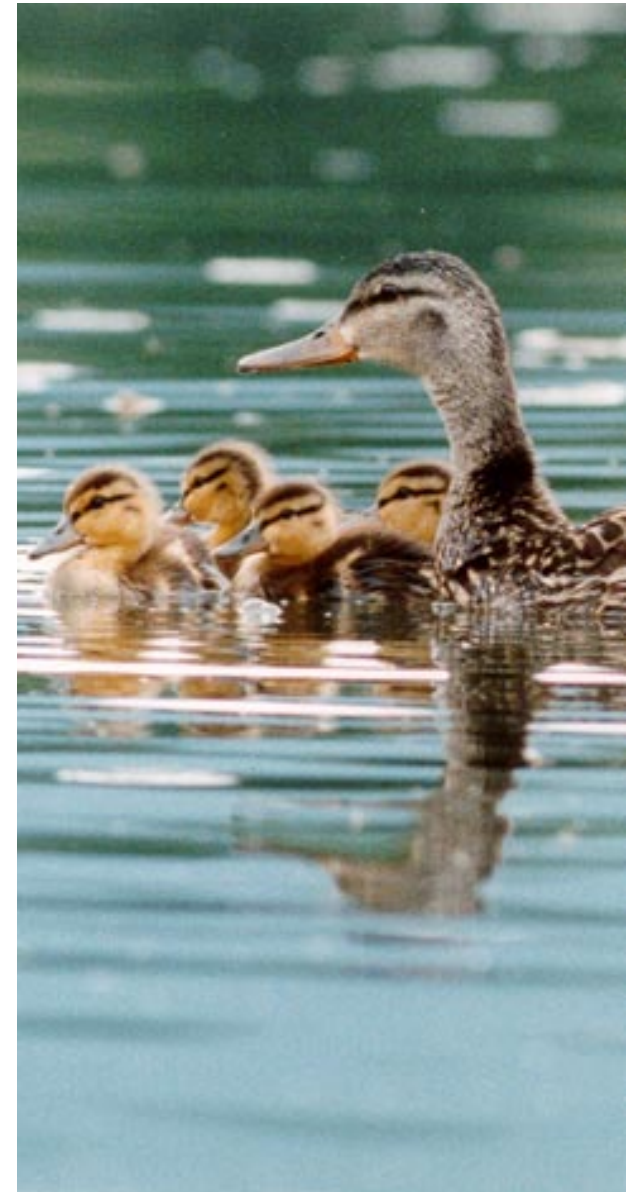


Photo © Jim Cruce

Please Don't
Feed the Waterfowl



Feeding Waterfowl

FEEDING WATERFOWL

Feeding waterfowl can create many problems for the birds as well as for the environment. This practice is discouraged by Audubon Society of Portland. The notion that waterfowl cannot survive without human intervention is false. Ducks and geese have survived for thousands of years without handouts, and today many species of waterfowl are thriving. In fact, many of our urban parks are now over-populated with ducks and geese. Please enjoy our local waterfowl but view them from a distance and respect their wildness. By doing so, you will provide them with their best chance for survival.

Reasons not to feed waterfowl:

1. Feeding waterfowl can quickly lead to overpopulation problems at small urban and suburban parks. Left on their own, ducks and geese will occupy areas that provide sufficient natural food. When local resources are low or depleted, individuals will move to new locations. Increasingly, our urban and suburban parks are home to year-round resident populations of waterfowl that remain static because of the endless food

supply provided by well-meaning humans. Many of our parks are plagued with sick and injured ducks that are a direct result of the intensive aggression and competition that occurs when waterfowl populations become concentrated. The Care Center receives dozens of severely injured female ducks each spring that have been attacked by gangs of aggressive drakes (male ducks). We also receive dozens of reports each spring of female mallards nesting far (sometimes more than a mile) from the nearest water source. This is a direct response to their inability to successfully incubate and raise young in our overpopulated parks.

2. Feeding waterfowl can lead to severe habitat degradation. Providing food quickly attracts concentrations of waterfowl beyond what the natural ecosystem can support. Large concentrations of waterfowl can reduce water quality and de-vegetate natural areas. Concentrating large populations of waterfowl into small natural areas is not a sustainable strategy. As numbers increase, natural forage will decrease and individuals will only become more dependent upon handouts.

3. Feeding can cause waterfowl to lose their natural fear of humans. For many wild animals, survival is



contingent upon maintaining a healthy fear of humans. Feeding waterfowl can quickly cause them to lose their instinctive sense of fear. While the food provider may have the best of intentions, the ducks still have to survive in a world filled with hazards. In an urban landscape full of dogs, cats, cars, and people, the duck or goose that maintains its innate wildness ultimately has the best chance for survival.

4. Feeding waterfowl can lead to dietary and nutritional problems for the birds. The age-old practice of feeding ducks and geese stale bread, pastries, cookies, and various other assorted types of junk food can cause significant health problems for these birds. Even when fed fresh, these highly processed foods provide little or no nutritional value and may actually contribute to starvation among waterfowl. Moldy foods can impact their health just as it does our own. Ducks and geese are far better off building their reserves by moving from location to location in search of a healthy natural diet than they are living on foods that we would never consider feeding to our children or our pets. Although all feeding is

