

Geese & Swans

- There are several species of geese and swans in BC, some migrate, others are resident, all are protected Migratory Birds
- The **Canada goose** (*Branta canadensis*) is a common icon year-round, but the migratory **snow geese** (*Chen caerulescens*) and **trumpeter swans** (*Cygnus buccinator*) are common in the winter



Canada Goose

Understanding Geese & Swans

Geese and swans are found in both urban and rural environments. These iconic water birds are common throughout BC all year round. The nests and eggs of these species are protected and cannot be interfered with without a permit, including the introduced mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) common in many urban parks.

Geese and Swans...

- typically lay 5-6 eggs once per year, and babies hatch in late spring
- babies will leave the nest to follow their parents shortly after hatching
- geese learn to fly at 6-9 weeks old, and swans at 3-5 months old
- healthy orphaned babies can often be introduced to a new family, in consultation with a wildlife rehabilitator

acting aggressively while protecting a nest, and gathering in large groups which can be noisy. Sometimes geese will nest on balconies or rooftops and their babies may need human assistance to come down. If babies end up in a backyard pool, they will need to be rescued immediately with a ramp or a net.

Humane Choices

The BC SPCA does not support killing geese and swans for nuisance reasons.

Killing is rarely necessary and control methods should be selected to cause the least harm to the animal's welfare. If attractants have not been removed, more birds may arrive, so follow-up monitoring is needed.

The BC SPCA strongly encourages non-lethal, non-contact methods. Prevention and exclusion comes first. Hazing should be done carefully to avoid potentially orphaning young.

Conflict Resolution

Geese and swans feel safe with low vegetation and good predatory sight lines, so habitat modification is key. **Intentional feeding in parks is highly discouraged and may be illegal in some municipalities.** Birds may be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment if injured. If in critical distress, a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator may euthanize. For more information on addressing geese and swan conflicts, *flip page over*.

Did you know?

Geese and swans are attentive, devoted parents, prefer open spaces and seek access to water and groomed grass to browse.



Trumpeter Swan

Common Conflicts

Geese and swans come into conflict because of their droppings, by nesting in urban structures, gathering in golf courses, parks and other green spaces, flying close to airports and/or flight routes, crossing busy roads with babies,

Recommended Actions & Methods

Prevention & Exclusion
Before any conflict, and
to prevent future issues

Remove potential food sources

- ➔ Primary food source is grasses, preferably young shoots
 - ✓ Make grass less attractive by replacing mowed grass with shrubs, long grasses or other dense plants, let grass grow to 15cm at least
 - ✓ Reduce fertilizer and water use to prevent young shoots
 - ✓ Attract birds to winter cover crops, like cereal grasses, to help reduce conflicts elsewhere

Modify habitat

- ✓ Use dense, tall plant cover (minimum 75cm high, 6m wide)
- ✓ Erect grids of overhead wire or a perimeter fence around ponds or swimming pools
- ✓ Increase slope of banks to 64° or more within 2m of water

Deterrence
If babies can fly, or no
babies present

Use mild humane harassment techniques

- ➔ Damage Permits are required to scare or kill migratory birds
 - ✓ Use devices like flags, balloons, reflective tape, purpose designed lasers, motion-activated sprinklers, and noise cannons or pyrotechnics
 - ✓ Addle eggs to prevent development and limit reproduction
 - ✓ Hazing with specially-trained raptors or dogs may also be used
 - ✓ Follow all prevention and exclusion steps above

These are legal, regulated methods - but they are **not recommended*** as they can cause animal suffering, may be high risk to non-targets, and/or are difficult to administer; legality must also be confirmed according to local bylaws and/or regulations

- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide - using pure gas cylinder into sealed chamber with regulator
- Shot to brain of trapped or free-ranging bird
- Cervical dislocation
- Penetrating and non-penetrating captive bolt
- Round-up during flightless moult
- Immobilization with alpha-chloralose followed by hand capture

*email wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca or information on these methods

It is **illegal** to use...

- Bait poisons or chloroform
- Drowning or suffocation
- Carbon monoxide by vehicle exhaust
- Crossbow
- Manually applied blunt trauma that does not induce immediate unconsciousness
- Freezing (including dry ice)