

Prospect Park Wildlife Management Advisory Committee

Canada Goose Management Plan

Brooklynites care so passionately about Prospect Park and its natural environment and many were truly disturbed by the USDA's actions to cull approximately 400 Canada geese in Prospect Park in the summer of 2010. In response, Prospect Park formed a Wildlife Management Advisory Committee (the Committee), consisting of professionals involved with animal welfare, education, science and urban park management. The Committee was tasked with an initial goal to recommend a Canada Goose Management Plan for Prospect Park that is scientifically sound, humane, practical, and transparent to the community. This plan would help maintain the goose population at acceptable levels to facilitate cleaner shorelines and water, as well as support a diverse array of waterfowl within Prospect Park's 585 acres. This management policy could serve as an example to others for the control of the Canada Goose population. It is understood, however, that the Mayor and the City of New York have the authority to give the USDA permission to employ Canada Geese mitigation measures as they see necessary.

Management Actions

The Committee reviewed a wide variety of potential management actions to control Canada geese in Prospect Park. Only actions selected by the Committee as appropriate for use in Prospect Park are included below. The criteria used to evaluate the various management actions were, scientific merit, humane practice, and practicality for the Park to undertake.

1. Designation of Prospect Park as a "no-feed" zone in city statutes and literature
Geese will linger in large numbers where they are being fed regularly. Feeding geese contributes to overpopulation both in Prospect Park Lake and in the entire region. Additionally, many of the things humans feed geese, especially bread, are actually harmful to them and the lake environment. The Park will work with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to get the Park designated as a "no-feed zone". This designation will require a significant amount of public education, enforcement and outreach to change behavior.
2. Egg oiling
This method involves going to nesting sites early in the nesting season and rendering the eggs unviable by coating them with oil. All necessary DEC permits would be obtained and Humane Society guidelines and training would be followed to ensure eggs were in the early stages of development. This practice could significantly reduce the number of goslings produced in the Park annually.
3. Border Collie Patrol
This proposal involves utilizing trained dogs and professional trainers, mostly on board a boat, to discourage geese from remaining in the Park after breeding season and before they molt. This method has been used successfully in other urban park areas. The timing and context of this action are both very important. It must take place in May and June, and it must follow a successful egg addling season since geese with young are less likely to leave the breeding grounds. This will depend on the cost and equipment availability.

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4. Habitat Modification

Geese prefer large swaths of grass and open areas with access to the shoreline. Shrubs or tall grasses impede vision and physical passage to and from water, and can potentially hide predators. Geese will tend to avoid areas planted in this manner. As Prospect Park continues to restore its waterways, care will be taken to try to reduce habitat for Canada Geese while enhancing habitat for other relatively rare species of migratory waterbird such as Pied-Billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*). The Park's desire to enhance and protect our natural systems is a top priority.

5. Research

Accurate population numbers for Canada Geese in Prospect Park are currently unavailable. The Park, with help from some members of the committee, aims to begin a more comprehensive population assessment in the Park. Things to look at include "migrant" versus "resident" populations, seasonal fluctuations, and breeding birds. The Committee also hope to gain better knowledge of the impact of large goose populations on water quality and on quality of habitat for other aquatic organisms. Finally, the Committee would want to be able to assess the effectiveness of our various goose management actions by ongoing monitoring.

Many of the management actions mentioned above can and should have an education and/or community involvement aspect. Prospect Park would like to work with various community members such as the Humane Society, the Brooklyn Bird Club, and Audubon as well as educational institutions to bring the community further into this process. A training program for this education will be developed and implemented by the Spring of 2011.

Prospect Park Wildlife Management Advisory Committee – Members

- Audubon New York
- Brooklyn Bird Club
- Brooklyn College
- Geese Peace
- Humane Society of the United States
- Prospect Park and Prospect Park Alliance
- Prospect Park Community Committee
- New York City Audubon
- New York City Council Member Brad Lander
- New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, including the Department's Urban Park Rangers and Natural Resources Group
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation