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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Gardner-Webb Facilities & Maintenance: 'Please Don't Feed Geese and other Wildlife'" (2021). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2272.
<https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive/2272>

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CAMPUS NEWS

Gardner-Webb Facilities & Maintenance: 'Please Don't Feed Geese and other Wildlife'

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2021



Feeding is Harmful for the Birds and Encourages Their Presence on Campus

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The ducks and Canadian geese living around Lake Hollifield on the Gardner-Webb University campus are entertaining to watch. However, what they leave behind on the grass and sidewalks destroys vegetation and carries diseases and bacteria. Additionally, nesting geese will chase people away to protect their eggs.

Because the population of these birds and other wildlife has grown substantially, the Gardner-Webb Department of Facilities & Maintenance requests help from campus members and the community to curb their numbers. David Wacaster, director of operations for Facilities and Maintenance, has consulted Dr. Joseph Oyugi, professor of biology, on humane ways to deter the birds.



The problem is two-fold, Wacaster noted. “The population has grown over the last few years to a point where migration has not occurred. Secondly, campus is a prime community for the geese to live,” he explained. “There is no hunting threat; campus is well maintained with the grass being cut weekly. There are no high weeds around the lake where potential animal predators can hide, and people are supplying food. We have tried to use a couple different types of spray to deter them, but the geese just move to other parts of campus, and the chemical becomes cost-prohibitive to apply.”

The first and most helpful action people can take to deter the geese and other wildlife is to avoid feeding them. Maintenance staff will place signs around Lake Hollifield to remind the campus community and visitors not to feed the animals. Besides making the wildlife want to stay on the property, feeding is harmful for them and creates more problems for humans.

“Some people feed them human food, which is not meant for them,” Oyugi stated. “This type of food can kill wildlife. Also, wildlife become dependent on humans for food. They lose their natural foraging behaviors. Wildlife can also attack if they are hungry, and no one is feeding them. Wildlife can also start entering human spaces to look for food. This is dangerous and can cause health hazards by spreading diseases.”

In addition, Wacaster noted that the department will use a variety of mitigation strategies to encourage the geese and ducks to leave. "We will basically begin a process to aggravate them to a point where they will develop a sense that this is not a good place to live," he specified.

Some of these actions include using decoy predators, radio controlled cars and boats, and artificial noise makers. Wacaster said he will also apply for an application from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to destroy the nesting areas of the Canadian geese.

More information about managing geese may be found [here](#)

(<https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/WildlifeProblems/documents/Managing%20Canada%20Geese%20in%20North%20Carolina.pdf>).

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