

# Urban Wildlife Committee

## Waterfowl Feeding Ban



- Urban Wildlife Committee was created in 2007 to make recommendations on various aspects of wildlife and related issues within the city
- Since inception, the Committee has wrestled with issues created by large population of Canada geese and ducks at Canyon Lake Park, Meadowbrook Golf Course and Storybook Island
- Committee has researched all manner of proposed solutions and contacted other communities and management agencies to see how they were addressing these problems.



- As a result of research, and based on community need, Waterfowl Management Plan was approved by City Council on April 6, 2009.
- Plan was developed, in part, as a result of the numerous complaints from the public about property damage, unsightliness, fecal droppings and public health and safety concerns.
- Plan outlines recommended methods to reduce the total number of waterfowl that stay in the City throughout the year

Rapid City Journal

# OPINION

OURS

## Birds and parks would be healthier with feeding ban

**THE ISSUE:** Waterfowl problems at Canyon Lake Park.

**OUR VIEW:** As much fun as it is, feeding waterfowl is bad for wildlife and for park users, too.

Please don't feed the ducks. Or the geese.

At least, not in Canyon Lake Park, where too many of them are creating enough waterfowl waste to ruin a walk in the park.

There is such a large flock taking refuge there on any given day that we would have thought it too big to count. Apparently not.

Volunteers with the Christmas Bird Count counted 1,435 Canada geese; 1,195 mallard ducks and 242 miscellaneous ducks (widgeons, buffleheads and others) on Dec. 16. They also spotted 265 rock pigeons that day. They didn't bother to count the numerous hybrids, crosses and non-native ducks, of which there are far too many, that also call Canyon Lake home.

And as Jim Good, chairman of Rapid City's Urban Wildlife Committee, knows, if people feed more than 3,000 birds, plenty of stale bread, French fries, popcorn and other human foods, waste problems inevitably will threaten water quality, impede grass growth and reduce public enjoyment of the park.

The Urban Wildlife Committee grew out of deer control issues within the city limits, but now Good and his fellow members plan to turn their attention to the overpopulation of waterfowl in Rapid City's parks. "There is a concern about the feeding of the waterfowl," Good said. "We're in the process of putting together a plan to address those concerns."

Good's committee could recommend the restriction of duck feeding to one small area. It could allow only designated waterfowl foods via on-site dispensers.

Human foods are bad for the physiology of birds. Grains or birdfeed designed specifically for waterfowl digestive systems may help reduce waste problems. Or the committee could propose a total ban on the beloved practice.

Currently, there is no city ordinance against feeding waterfowl at Canyon Lake. In fact, there is a longstanding tradition of doing so.

We think the city is right to address the waterfowl waste issue and the sooner they do so, the better.

Limiting or restricting feeding would be difficult to enforce, so we urge the committee to ban bird feeding at Canyon Lake and restore a healthier waterfowl population there.

It isn't good for people. It isn't good for the park. And it isn't good for the birds, either.



# Population Stabilization

- Will slow or reverse the growth in waterfowl populations
- Will reduce the loyalty of adult geese to a specific site for future nesting/molting, and
- Will break the biological necessity for adult geese to stay in Rapid City through molting season (late July)

# Site Aversion/Nuisance Abatement

- The site aversion program will reduce the number of geese during the spring, summer and fall months, and
- Will lead to establishment of a long-term maintenance program that will sustain nuisance free facilities in future years.



# Public Education

- General Public: Will host public events and make presentations and provide displays at events throughout City to inform public about Waterfowl Management Plan
- Schools: Develop instructional materials for students in RC School District with message to enjoy birds, but do what we can to keep them wild.
- Allowing the public to feed waterfowl promotes the idea of "helping" them. Waterfowl, when left alone to forage for themselves, will make much better food choices

# Feeding Ducks/Geese

- Feeding causes waterfowl to congregate in areas resulting in:
  - 1) a concentration of fecal droppings
  - 2) overgrazing of grass areas
  - 3) increased possibility of disease transfer, and
  - 4) increase in aggressive behavior
  
- If the feeding ban is approved, information will be distributed to community through local media outlets, newsletters and other available options.

# Summary

- Urban Wildlife Committee has discussed and researched all options and issues relative to ducks and geese in Rapid City
- Number of waterfowl living at Canyon Lake Park, Storybook Island and Meadowbrook Golf Course is increasing and causing significant damage to the park and surrounding private properties
- State Game Fish & Parks Department will not issue permits to reduce the number of waterfowl unless a no feeding ordinance is implemented
- Concern has been expressed about the impact the large number of waterfowl has on the water quality in Canyon Lake



# Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Urban Wildlife Committee that the City of Rapid City implement a no feeding ordinance for waterfowl within the City limits.

