

Frequently Asked Questions:

Canada Geese Control Program – Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, August 2009

Why is Regional Parks undertaking geese management at Elk Beaver Lake?

Elk Beaver Lake has become home to hundreds of Canada Geese, which has become problematic:

- Geese produce large amounts of feces that increase coliform levels in lake water, cause odor and create slippery trails
- When nesting, geese can become aggressive towards humans

What does the goose control program entail?

Regional Parks has contracted a professional dog handler to move the geese to areas away from the beaches in a humane and environmentally sensitive manner. The patrols will take place at the park throughout August and September in the evenings.

Parks operations staff also rakes the beaches on a daily basis to remove goose droppings. In July when the geese are molting their flight feathers, snow fencing is placed in the water just offshore to keep geese off beach areas.

Will the geese be harmed by the dogs?

The dog handler employs methods advocated by Environment Canada to avoid injury to the birds. The dogs are trained to chase the geese on command, forcing the birds to fly away. The dogs occasionally bark but do not physically touch or harm the birds. Once the geese recognize the handler and dogs, their presence becomes a deterrent to settling into the patrolled areas.

Is a permit required for the dog patrols?

This activity is allowed without a permit under the Wildlife Act between August 1 and April 30. A permit is required from the Ministry of the Environment from May to July. However, at this time Regional Parks is only employing the dog patrol as a test program from August to September.

Has the dog patrol been done elsewhere successfully?

Yes, the dog handler has conducted goose patrols for the City of Victoria at Beacon Hill Park, as well as golf courses in the region.

Is this method just displacing geese to nearby farms or other parks?

The goal is to keep the geese only off the two public beaches in the park. There are many other areas, including islands, within the park that the geese can fly to.

Are Canada Geese native to Vancouver island?

Before 1967, the Canada Goose was considered a migrant and an infrequent visitor to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. During the 1970s, Canada Geese were introduced to the Lower Mainland (and other areas of Canada) to provide a population for both local hunting and wildlife viewing. Since the 1970s, however, rapid urbanization of the

Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island has resulted in the closure of many areas to hunting. Because of a decrease in hunting and because Canada Geese have adapted so well to living in urban and suburban environments, their numbers have increased substantially. About half of the wintering population of Canada Geese in southwestern British Columbia are non migratory, or year-round residents.

What is being done to safe guard the public from swimming in contaminated beach water from geese feces?

In addition to the CRD's program to manage the Canada Geese, the Vancouver Island Health Authority monitors beaches regularly to measure levels of fecal coliform bacteria in the water. Should coliform levels exceed safe limits, VIHA posts warnings at the beach advising the public that the water may be unsafe for swimming.

Where can I find out more information about the VIHA beach report?

VIHA posts a beach reports and information about water testing at their website:

www.viha.ca/mho/environment/water_quality/beach_reports.htm

What is Fecal Coliform?

Fecal Coliform is the commonly-used bacterial indicator of sanitary quality of foods and water. Coliforms are abundant in the feces of warm-blooded animals, but can also be found in the aquatic environment, in soil and on vegetation. In most instances, coliforms themselves are not the cause of sickness, but they are easy to culture and their presence is used to indicate that other pathogenic organisms of fecal origin may be present.

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