

5 REASONS WHY FEEDING WATERFOWL IS HARMFUL



People have always enjoyed feeding swans, geese, and ducks on North Lake. What they might not realize is that feeding these animals is detrimental to the birds and the environment in many significant ways.

For all waterfowl, the abundance of naturally occurring food and the quality of their diet are the main driving forces behind the birds' ability to survive. The diet of a young bird during its first year of life must be high in essential fats, proteins and nutrients to ensure proper development. Adults need a nutrient rich diet in order to replace feathers, and recondition their bodies after migration and during breeding cycles. People unknowingly harm waterfowl by hand feeding food that is low in nutritional value.

Problems associated with feeding waterfowl include:

- ◇ Malnutrition
- ◇ Dependency
- ◇ Disease
- ◇ Water pollution
- ◇ Environmental degradation

1. Malnutrition



Wildlife species have developed skills to obtain food that contains the essential nutrients needed to survive, reproduce and live a healthy life. This balance is compromised by hand feeding, which is physically harmful to birds and is one of the primary causes of malnutrition. Foods such as bread and crackers don't provide the necessary energy and nutrients for proper health, and energy is wasted in digesting these foods. Malnutrition leads to low energy and muscle deterioration, development of deformed wings, loss of flight later in life, and lowered life expectancy.

2. Dependency



Waterfowl will congregate in areas with abundant food and space. Unfortunately, hand feeding can cause birds to become concentrated in areas that are incapable of supporting large numbers of birds. The birds then become dependent upon humans for food and can become nuisance animals. Some species, including mute swans, can become aggressive and may need to be removed.

Dependency leads to loss of natural fear of humans and aggressive behavior, overpopulation, and delay or halting of migration to natural wintering sites.

3. Disease



Lowered nutrition and overpopulation allow disease to spread more quickly, potentially infecting thousands of birds with fatal diseases. These risks increase when bird populations become concentrated at feeding sites due to human feeding.

4. Environmental degradation



Waterfowl congregate where food is plentiful. However, when hand feeding occurs, this leads to degradation of the landscape and unsanitary conditions due to large quantities of bird feces.

5. Water pollution



People who feed waterfowl also contribute significantly to water pollution in the form of *fecal coliform bacteria*. This indicates fecal contamination, generally *E.Coli* but also includes other pathogens. These cause serious health problems to both humans and animals, including hepatitis, gastroenteritis, dysentery and skin infections.

Please Do Not Feed The Waterfowl