

Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee

Report

6th Meeting of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee
June 6, 2024

Attendance W. Brown (Chair), L. Armstrong, A. Hames, A. Hayes, N. Karsch and M. Rist and H. Lysynski (Acting Clerk)

ABSENT: M. Blosch, K. Coulter and M. Toplack

ALSO PRESENT: E. Hunt, W. Jeffery and M. McBride

The meeting commenced at 3:03 PM; it being noted that W. Brown, L. Armstrong and N. Karsch were in remote attendance.

1. Call to Order

1.1 Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

That it BE NOTED that no pecuniary interests were disclosed.

2. Scheduled Items

None.

3. Consent

3.1 5th Report of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the 5th Report of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee, from its meeting held on May 2, 2024, was received.

4. Sub-Committees and Working Groups

None.

5. Items for Discussion

5.1 Avenues to Maximize Public Awareness Education on Bird Friendly Glass and Light Impacts – Update

That the following actions be taken with respect to the public awareness education on bird friendly glass and light impacts:

a) the attached list of events prepared by N. Karsch and M. Rist BE FORWARDED to the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee Sub-Committee for review and to report back at the next meeting; it being noted that once a recommendation has been prepared, the Civic Administration will be invited to the meeting; and,

b) M. Rist BE DIRECTED to contact Pawlooza to book a table for the AWCAC.

5.2 Humane Co-existence Strategies for Canada Geese and Human Interface in Parks

That the attached Habitat Modification and Restoration strategies BE FORWARDED to the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee Sub-Committee for review and report back at the next meeting.

5.3 Wildlife Harms and Rodenticide Use – Update

That the following actions be taken with respect to Rodenticide use in City facilities:

- a) the Senior Manager of Facilities BE INVITED to attend a future Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee meeting prior to the City renewing its contract for pest control service in 2025 to review the scope of the contract and discuss alternative strategies to use of poison at municipal facilities; and,
- b) a Working Group BE ESTABLISHED to prepare recommendations for print and online communications to support public education about best practices to prevent rodent infestations and apply rodent exclusion methods at residential buildings;

it being noted that the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee received a communication from the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee and the Environmental Stewardship and Action Community Advisory Committee and held a general discussion with respect to these matters.

5.4 AWCAC Banner – Update

That the discussion of the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee banner BE POSTPONED to the next Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee meeting.

5.5 Bird-Friendly Displays – Update

That it BE NOTED that the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee held a general discussion with respect to the bird friendly displays.

5.6 Budget Expense Goals for 2024

That a Working Group BE ESTABLISHED consisting of A. Haynes, A. Hames and M. Rist, to provide recommendations for the expenditure of the 2024 Budget; it being noted that the Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee held a general discussion with respect to these matters.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:47 PM.

AWCAC - Bird Display Discussion

Nicole & Mike

May 23, 2024

- Unless Wendy or another AWCAC committee member(s) already have a contact at the hospital, Dr. Anna Gunz, pediatric doctor, at the Children's Hospital, is a great contact to reach out to. The organization I work for (LEN) has participated in outreach events at the hospital before with success
 - Nicole can connect or provide contact information if needed
- **City of London bird series**
 - Is this referring to Nature in the City? If so, this is ongoing and AWCAC could connect with organizations that are part of it (Nature London)
- **London International Airport**
 - Mike contacted Laura Cooper (marketing) at the airport. She is open to working with us and will take it up with the airport manager. She would need some visuals to show as well.
- **List of events that AWCAC could consider attending in the future:**
 - Lifestyle Home Show - <https://lifestylehomeshow.ca/> (Next date: January 24-26, 2025)**
 - Seedy Saturday - <https://londonmiddlesexmastergardeners.com/seedy-saturday-2024/> (Next date TBD)
 - Eco Adventures - London Children's Museum - https://www.londonenvironment.net/london_children_s_museum_eco_adventures (Next date or if it is happening again is TBD)
 - EnviroCon - UWO <https://www.uwo.ca/enviro/envirocon/index.html> (Next date and topic TBD)
 - EarthFest - <https://www.earthfestlondon.ca/> (Next date but will be one Saturday in April 2025)
 - Hope in the Land (previously Go Wild Grow Wild) <https://caroliniancanada.ca/expo> (Next date is TBD but likely early May 2025)
 - Pawlooza - <https://www.pawlooza.com/> (August 17th, 2024) - free booth space for non-profit organizations (Contact: Heather Gerofsky, Vendor Coordinator).**
 - Salthaven - <https://www.salthaven.org/events> - hosts weekly presentations throughout the summer in / around the London area. (Next London Event is July 3rd - at Byron Public Library)**
- Organizations AWCAC could consider collaborating with: (that focus on animals, habitats, conservation, etc.)

- ALUS Middlesex - https://www.londonenvironment.net/alus_middlesex (support to farmers delivering ecosystem services)
- Bird Friendly London - https://www.londonenvironment.net/bird_friendly_london (looks to transform urban spaces to better protect and support bird species)
- LOLA Bees - https://www.londonenvironment.net/lola_bees (urban beekeeping)
- London Urban Beekeepers Collective - https://www.londonenvironment.net/london_urban_beekeepers_collective (urban beekeeping)
- Nature London - https://www.londonenvironment.net/nature_london_mcilwraith_field_naturalists_of_london (seeks to preserve and enjoy nature)
- Pollinator Pathways Project - https://www.londonenvironment.net/pollinator_pathways_project (seeks to create a network of pollinator habitats across London)
- Thames Talbot Land Trust - https://www.londonenvironment.net/thames_talbot_land_trust (protection of lands and waters)
- Western Wildlife Conservation Society - https://www.londonenvironment.net/western_wildlife_conservation_society (group of students dedicated to conservation and animal rehabilitation)
- Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education Center - <https://www.salthaven.org/> (care and rehabilitation of wildlife)

The Animal Welfare Community Advisory Committee recommends Habitat Modification and Restoration strategies be implemented on a park by park, site by site specific uses bases, in which there is conflict due to high human goose interface, and allow and or develop areas for the enjoyment and appreciation of Canada Geese, as well as the needs of wildlife in areas that do not conflict with those specific land uses.

Background:

The AWCAC heard a delegation from an individual who expressed concern regarding the congregation of Canada Geese in areas where people recreate in parks, such as splash pads and walk ways, with a request for solutions.

The AWCAC met with Paul Yeoman, and held a discussion, regarding specific factors that lead to the densification of Canada Geese in site specific areas of use, that are highly attractive to both humans and Canada Geese.

The AWCAC provided to Paul Yeoman, the source book, **Habitat Modification and Canada Geese**, containing best practices for mitigating human goose conflicts in urban and suburban areas, developed specifically for municipal governance by Dr. Jeff Keller (BSc., P.h.D. Wildlife Ecology), Deborah Doncaster (B.A., M.A., M.E.S. Wildlife Planning and Ecological Restoration in Urban Environments), and Getanjali Guill, (B.A., M.A. London School of Economics).

The research was funded by the Canada Wildlife Service, the City of Mississauga, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Humane Society of the United States, Animal Alliance of Canada, and the Animal Protection Institute to establish the way forward for lasting, humane solutions by incorporating the understanding of Canada Geese ecology into urban planning for parks usage goals.

Findings:

The AWCAC has identified the following key factors that have attracted geese to these areas:

- Evolutionarily, Canada geese are tundra nesters that prefer low vegetation adjacent to open water. From a landscape perspective, this arrangement of habitat components is exceedingly simple and lacks any significant vertical elements. The created landscapes typical of many parks, campuses and golf courses (i.e., open water adjacent to mowed lawn) are human-made versions of these naturally occurring open, structurally simple landscapes. Evolutionarily, Canada geese are tundra nesters that prefer low vegetation adjacent to open water. From a landscape perspective, this arrangement of habitat components is exceedingly simple and lacks any significant vertical elements. The created landscapes typical of many parks, corporate campuses and golf courses (i.e., open water adjacent to mowed lawn) are human-made versions of these naturally occurring open, structurally simple landscapes.
- The simplification of park scape features such as grasses mowed short, provide for the preferred grass tuff conditions for foraging. many plants and animals have lost the habitats they need for survival.
- The consequence of habitat loss for our urban and suburban green spaces is that rather than supporting a diversity of species, these simplified landscapes support large numbers of a few

species, Canada Geese being an obvious one. Managed, manicured lawns, chemical applications, and with few, if any, trees and shrubs (“open space”), jeopardizes the integrity of our ecosystems that would support the kind of biodiverse plants and animals that bring populations of species into a better balance. Canada geese are a visible testament to the expanse of habitat simplification and environmental degradation in our urban environments.

- Easy access to from the water to on shore with no obstacles to prevent their coming onto land.
- Access to areas in which there are optimal sight lines from land to the waterway that allow for escape from predators preferred by Canada Geese.
- Splash pads located near water ways that provide relief for Canada Geese, while at the same time provide suitable sight lines to avoid predators and escape to the water.
- Lack of awareness by the public of unintended consequences of feeding Canada Geese as it relates to an inflation in Canada Geese populations, disrupts migration, and increases their congregation in areas where humans recreate.

Recommended Principles to Decrease Habitat Suitability:

- Reduce sightlines at access points to and within foraging or nesting areas. Suitable goose habitat generally consists of large areas of low vegetation, typically grass, adjacent or close to open water, where sightlines are long and early predator detection and escape are facilitated.
- Reducing sightlines to the point where geese are uncomfortable (<9m) is the most general landscape principle that can be applied to reduce the attractiveness of an area to geese. (Think like a goose!).
- Physically reduce or impede access to foraging areas via water or air. Where sightline reduction is insufficient to deter use, employ landscaping approaches that physically reduce access to areas attractive to geese.
- Reduce actual size of foraging areas where sightline reduction is insufficient to deter use, employ landscaping approaches that reduce or eliminate the extent of areas attractive to geese.
- Reduce forage palatability. Young grass shoots, particularly those of finer-bladed species such as Kentucky bluegrass, are the preferred food of geese. Any techniques that reduces the proportion or availability of young shoots of finely bladed species within a foraging area will reduce the attractiveness of that area to geese.
- Provide preferred grazing areas for Geese to nest, and graze using habitat modification techniques and and natural landscaping.

Recommended techniques:

Use shoreline treatments that deter geese from gaining access to their preferred foraging habitat, mowed lawn, via from the water to the shore such as habitat modification along the shoreline, coupled with those on land.

Create Aquatic Benches of aquatic emergent vegetation along the shoreline of a waterbody to create a physical as well as a visual barrier to geese. Aquatic benches are shallow, adjacent to the shoreline, graded to a depth of 12-15”, sloped rapidly to deeper water. They should be coupled with buffer plantings on the landward side of the shoreline for maximum effectiveness.

Create Hard Edges (Rock Barriers, Decks and Boardwalks) with the objective of providing attractive physical and visual access to the water for humans while simultaneously precluding access for geese, and can be accomplished using a variety of techniques.

Implement Terrestrial Treatments, using the simple rule that it should be tall enough and dense enough to disrupt goose sight lines.

Create Low Shrubs and Meadows Native grassland / wildflower meadows and low shrubs (0.8-2m) used in combination or as separate plantings, which can be very effective in reducing levels of Canada geese, especially when combined with other landscape treatments. Barrier Fences

Use Barrier Fencing which can be combined with shrub plantings and according to the fencing features and height recommendations for avoiding ensnarement or damage to fencing. Grazing Area Treatments

Reduce Areas of Grazing by reducing area of lawn, reduce or eliminate mowing, reduce or eliminate fertilizer use, stop watering lawns, and by planting less palatable plants.

Create an alternative feeding area in which the congregation of large numbers of geese does not generate human-geese conflict. Trees

Stands of tall Trees to prevent geese from landing in grazing areas, by increasing the angle of ascent (also known as the flight clearance angle) to >13 degrees. Stands must be dense enough that geese cannot maneuver through the canopy. Given the time it takes for stands to become tall enough, tall tree barriers must be considered as a long-term objective in the overall habitat modification program.

Conclusion:

Canada geese provide a very visible indication of the environmental problems associated with the design and maintenance of our urban green space. Canada geese are not the problem, per se, rather, they are symptomatic of a broader, deeper problem - ecological degradation. The source book provides habitat modification prescriptions that are ecologically based. The recommendation in terms of types of species and configuration of landscapes useful in mitigating human-geese conflicts, reflect an understanding of current approaches to ecological restoration.

Along with the primary objective of reducing human/goose conflicts, habitat modification prescriptions contained in the document, have the added benefits of biodiversity enhancement, recreational diversification, beautification, CO2 reduction, smog reduction, and riparian rehabilitation.

It is the conclusion of the AWCAC after careful examination of the issues, that the document provides a municipal template for addressing site by site land usage intentions and purposes, from an understanding of Canada Goose ecology, in order to reach humane, lasting solutions and improvements to our city parks, and empowers communities to co-exist with wildlife, in ways that better serve the needs of people, the health of the environment, and of wildlife.