

8TH REPORT OF THE
ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on August 4, 2016, commencing at 5:00 PM, in Committee Room #4, Second Floor, London City Hall.

PRESENT: W. Brown (Chair), H. de Hoog, M. Gelinas, V. Lightfoot, P. Lystar, E. Nicholas, A. Parsons and M. Toplack and J. Martin (Secretary).

ABSENT: K. Ashe, K. MacIntosh, P. Newbould, M. Puzanov, D. Simpson and J. Sukhdeo.

ALSO PRESENT: F. Sekercioglu.

I. CALL TO ORDER

1. Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

That it BE NOTED that no pecuniary interests were disclosed.

II. SCHEDULED ITEMS

None.

III. CONSENT ITEMS

2. 7th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the 7th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, from its meeting held on June 2, 2016, was received.

3. Municipal Council Resolution - 6th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the Municipal Council resolution adopted at its meeting held May 31, 2016, with respect to the 6th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, was received.

4. Municipal Council Resolution - Appointments to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the Municipal Council resolution adopted at its meeting held June 14, 2016, with respect to appointments to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, was received.

5. Municipal Council Resolution - 7th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the Municipal Council resolution adopted at its meeting held June 23, 2016, with respect to the 7th Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, was received.

IV. SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS

6. Wild-life Sub-Committee

That it BE NOTED that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) received a verbal update from W. Brown, on behalf of the AWAC Wildlife Sub-Committee.

7. Companion Animals Sub-Committee

None.

V. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

8. Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy: Forestry Operations Wildlife Protocol

That the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to consider the attached feedback with respect to the staff report dated July 19, 2016 from J. Parsons, Division Manager, Transportation and Roadside Operations, entitled "Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy: Forestry Operations Wildlife Protocol".

9. Education/Outreach Joint Discussion of Advisory Committees Update

That it BE NOTED that the communication date June 22, 2016 from S. Ratz, Advisory Committee on the Environment, and A. Stratton, Transportation Advisory Committee, with respect to the Education/Outreach Joint Discussion of Advisory Committees, was received.

10. Bird Friendly Guidelines

That it BE NOTED that discussion with respect to the bird friendly guidelines was deferred to the next meeting of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

11. Business Licensing of Pet Stores

That the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to provide additional information with respect to the business licensing of pet stores; it being noted that Animal Welfare Advisory Committee received the staff report dated June 21, 2016, from G. Kotsifas, Managing Director, Development and Compliance Services and Chief Building Official, with respect to this matter.

12. Transfer of Animals to Outside Groups/Organizations Update

That it BE NOTED that discussion with respect to the bird friendly guidelines was deferred to the next meeting of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

13. Wildlife Feeding By-law Recommendations

That the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to consider the attached recommendations with respect to a proposed no feeding wildlife by-law and the attached strategies for the management of Canada Geese on City of London parkland and golf courses.

VI. DEFERRED MATTERS/ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 PM.

NEXT MEETING DATE: September 1, 2016

Recommended Changes and Additions to the Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy: Forestry Operations Wildlife Protocol.

- a) consideration be given to including the word Humane with each reference to the protocol:
- b) consideration be given to the number of consecutive trees being cut to ensure we provide adequate and appropriate opportunities for wildlife to relocate to mature trees in the immediate area;
- c) consideration be given to focus on trimming any potentially dangerous branches rather than the removal of the entire tree when assessing and prioritizing trees (on public property and street trees) for public safety. Convenience/logistics should not be a factor in the decision to trim or remove trees that are not an immediate threat to public safety;
- d) consideration should be taken to remove no more than 25% of mature street trees on any single side of 1 city block during any 1 year period and city trees in other public areas (i.e. parks) should only be removed when necessary for public safety, except in cases where multiple trees present an immediate risk;
- e) consideration be given to plant new replacement trees prior to the removal of older trees where possible;
- f) consideration be given, after every effort to reunite birds and mammals with parents has been exhausted, to the removal and transport of orphaned or injured infant, juvenile or adult birds and mammals to an authorized wildlife custodian when necessary;

Training

- g) consideration be given to including an authorized wildlife custodian as part of the training team to ensure understanding the natural history of the tree dwelling species as an important part of developing appropriate protocols to ensure the objectives of the Human Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy are met;
- h) consideration be given for mandatory training for all new employee and contracted tree trimming companies;
- i) consideration be given to provide the AWAC an opportunity to be included in the development of the training protocols and recommended actions protocols for re-nesting birds and denning/nesting mammals;
- j) consideration be given to include clarification with respect to the name and/or qualifications of the facilitator, details of the course content and who will receive the training [in reference to 10 b) the third party training facilitator who will develop a specialized training course to compliment this protocol];

Protocol

- k) consideration be given to providing additional detail for pre-stressing, to include:
 - i. a wait time between pre stressing and actual cutting of the tree of not less than 1 day and no more than 2 days;
 - ii. a detailed outline of additional steps for the Forestry Supervisor to direct staff on relocating nests/animals in adjacent limbs or trees and installing nesting boxes; and,
 - iii. steps to call a licensed wildlife custodian (contact list to be compiled) for advice

Strategies for the Management of Canada Geese in the City of London parks and golf courses.

Background History

Young geese learn to migrate from their parents, therefore, year round resident geese are the result of local breeding populations that have become established since their reintroduction and restoration in this area since the 1970's. Prior to that, they were considered temporary visitors.

Canada geese are able to take advantage of changes such as deforestation, development, and Southwestern Ontario's large scale agriculture, consuming large quantities of grains and some vegetable crops in fall and winter to build fat reserves...sustaining them as year round residents in this region. Shoreline development, lawns, and urban landscapes that protect from human and nonhuman predators, also provide year round ample food sources contributing substantially to increased overwinter survival and reproductive output.

Geese may not be perceived as a problem and in fact, may be welcomed in areas such as wetlands where higher numbers can be tolerated and the presence of people is low. They are less tolerated in urban parks where human recreational pursuits such as splash pads, high traffic bike paths and walkways put humans in opposition to large numbers of geese who will aggressively protect their young from the proximity of people, and where goose excrement can become a public health and safety concern.

It is well documented and well understood that feeding Canada Geese has a direct effect on the growth of urban populations and brings them into direct conflict with humans as a result of their learned dependency, habituation, and tolerance. It is also a well-established fact that feeding geese is detrimental to their health and welfare, and changes their natural processes such as migration over successive generations of the species. The general public is largely unaware of this fact and have continued to ignore signage discouraging the feeding of geese in parks. The feeding of wildlife is not endorsed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for the above stated reasons.

Many people enjoy feeding these gregarious birds and concern for year round established residents, especially in the colder winter months makes the management of Canada geese a high profile, and often emotional issue. Therefore, **it is imperative that public education be a key component to avoiding lethal measures as a management strategy, and better support a No Feeding Wildlife Bylaw in the eyes of the public.**

A No Feeding Wildlife Bylaw, as it relates to London's progressive Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy would better reflect to the public, co flourishing with wildlife in a manner that does not undermine the health and welfare of wildlife. Public education must focus on promoting awareness regarding the detrimental effects to the health, safety, and welfare of both humans and geese alike.

Understanding Canada geese biology, and behavior are key to applying appropriate management strategies...Timing is everything!

In summer, goslings and moulting adults require higher levels of protein found in young shoots of grass, which explains the popularity of urban parks and golf courses. London's urban parks provide large, open mowed grassy areas perfect not only for dietary needs, but also provide a quick escape from predators to water ways for goslings and flightless adults (moulting season). Urban landscapes offer predator proofing by way of urban development and human activity.

***Management strategies implications:**

First and for most, stop feeding geese! Supplemental feeding encourages high concentrations of geese year round along with high concentrations of coliform bacteria in waterways, disease transmission between geese, other wildlife species, and artificial diets/handouts, mono diet offerings such as crack corn offer little or no nutritional value, and are detrimental the health and welfare of geese. In Wildlife rehabilitation settings, geese are admitted with internal blockages caused by hand feeding bread, and other inappropriate offerings which provides little or no nutritional benefit to them. Blockages prevent any further intake of food to be digested resulting in starvation and death due to poor nutrition and or a host of secondary conditions/infections as a result of these circumstances.

*Modifications to the landscape **is the most effective long term solution** to human goose conflict and for the health, safety and welfare of both humans and geese, **when applied in combination with public education, and a no feeding by law.**

Modifications are easy to implement, environmentally friendly, visually attractive, and non-lethal to geese. **The desired effects are long lasting** as a result of changes to the landscape, **while strategies such as hazing and oiling eggs are temporary solutions and must be applied yearly. As a result, they become a costly and ongoing addition to city budgets.**

Employing the help of dogs as part of a management strategy is ineffective when geese are raising their young and when adult geese are already moulting as they cannot fly away, and will also not leave their lagging young behind. (Moulting occurs mid-May/early June and late July.) Hazing programs are only effective during pre moulting season when large flocks of pre moulting birds begin to gather and before the geese become flightless, **and only in combination with modifications to the landscape as part of an overall strategy for any lasting results.**

In the spring, pairs may find a suitable nesting site as early as February, having established a territory by mid-late March. The brooding period (hatchling to being able to fly) lasts about two months. Moulting adults are rendered flightless at the same time that they are raising their goslings and gain their ability to fly also at the same time as their offspring.

The most important factor limiting the growth of goose populations is the survival rate of adults. They breed at 2-3 years of age, nest yearly and can live for 20 years so the number of geese can increase rapidly over time in urban areas where the survival rate for both the adults and their offspring is very high.

***Management Strategies Implications:**

Avoid creating nesting habitats such as artificial islands in rivers and ponds. Discourage geese from nesting by using scaring techniques and habitat modifications. See Environment Canada Handbook Canada and Cackling Geese: Management and Population Control in Southern Ontario sections 7.1.2 and 7.1.3. Geese prefer young tender shoots of grass, longer grass becomes coarse and fibrous, making it unpalatable to geese. Also geese prefer easy access to water and clear sight lines to predators, easy access to escape routes to water. Therefore erecting **PLANT BARRIERS:** wide swaths of tall coarse grasses by not mowing, or by planting native coarse grass species, dense shrubs, aquatic plants, trees between walk ways, bike paths and the water ways/ boarding waterways is an effective, permanent strategy. They must be tall enough that the geese cannot see over them, wide plantings more effective than narrow ones.

Scaring/hazing, techniques such as air horns are noisy, temporary fixes, geese often become habituated and will return when dogs are not there and must be employed yearly. Hazing with dogs can cause injury to fleeing geese and geese also become tolerant and habituated and will return when dogs are not present. The oiling of eggs is not humane, disrupts the natural processes of Canada Geese, and are temporary fixes without making changes to the landscape to make urban parks less attractive for geese. These techniques have limited success, are expensive, permits may be required by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the timing for application of these strategies can be challenging given fluctuations in climate as it relates to the timing of breeding and nesting.

Geese are intelligent and can understand overtime that flagging tape, streamers, balloons, kites, scarecrows pose no real threat.

Employing strobe lights/lasers are temporary fixes, disruptive to the natural processes of song birds and other animals on the landscape and may disturb people.

Relocation does not solve the problem as it must be employed when geese are flightless. Geese will return once flighted, motivated by the pressures of predation and hunting, and less desirable landscapes.

Summary

Public education regarding human health and safety and the negative effects to the health, welfare, natural processes of Canada geese and ducks.

It is imperative to employ strategies for managing the growth of Canada geese and duck populations in urban areas in tandem with public education. Feeding wildlife along with urban expansion inevitably leads to increased interaction between humans, their pets, and property and leads to undesirable outcomes for both wildlife and humans. It is well established by experts that providing attractants and feeding wildlife is the leading cause of negative interactions, perceptions, and the health and welfare of wildlife and humans.

Creating a no feeding by law and providing opportunities to raise public awareness and education is an opportunity for the City of London to take a progressive, effective and humane long term solution to co flourishing with wildlife. Feeding wildlife changes the very nature and behavior in wildlife species which have evolved to contribute to the natural order and balance of flora, fauna, and in relationship to all other life forms. As they become dependent upon and habituated to humans, their natural processes such as migration are altered permanently given they learn this behavior from their parents. This is a good example of how feeding wildlife disrupts their natural history and puts their numbers out of balance in relationship to what can be supported by the landscape.

Wildlife may also be perceived as “pests” and as a “nuisance” due to a lack of education creating a disconnect between how human activities such as feeding bring wildlife into direct conflict with humans.

Feeding geese creates high concentrations of birds in close proximity to one another, increasing disease transmission, and mass feeding separates offspring from their parents as a feeding frenzy erupts. In winter months, geese who do not migrate can become trapped in ice due to rapid fluctuations in temperatures and will often experience wing and leg fractures as they struggle to free themselves, becoming “sitting ducks”, terrified, in pain, and exposed to predation for many days and nights without the possibility of safe human intervention to rescue them. Often, once rescued they must be euthanized due to the nature of their injuries and because they are rendered non releasable.

*Moving forward, It will be imperative to ensure a high level of public education and awareness along with improvements to and an increase in signage in urban parks and golf courses to reflect messaging that will assist the public to understand the negative effects of feeding ducks and geese. It will also be important that Wildlife Custodians be able to respond to wildlife in distress. Given the high numbers of “non- migrating”, established Geese in London Parks, the public may be concerned about the possibility that Geese will suffer from starvation under a no feeding by law. During cold harsh winter months this may well occur. It remains imperative that Authorized Wildlife Custodians be able to respond, so consideration should be given to ensuring Authorized Wildlife Custodians be exempt from this by law and the public be reassured that they will be able to attend to the health and welfare of geese.

Signage Suggestions

Examples of Educational Signage for Parks and City Golf Courses

Example no. 3 appeals the most to public empathy and could be applied along with by law information



Recommendations with respect to a proposed No Feeding Wildlife By-law:

Include: “Does not apply to feeding of song birds on a property, provided the following feeding requirements are met by the resident:

1. Bird feeding practices do not attract large flocks of homing birds such as wild, feral, or domestic pigeons.
2. Spillage of seed on the ground is removed by the property owner or resident forthwith and disposed of in such a manner that it does not attract wild, feral, or stray domestic animals.

Include: “No person shall intentionally feed a wild animal or leave food or attractants of any type or in any form out of doors in such a manner as to attract, or be accessible by a wild animal, feral or stray domestic animal on private or public property.”

Include: “A person may feed or permit the feeding of a feral cat, if the feral cat belongs to a colony of stray or feral cats **identified** for the purpose of trap, neuter or spay and release programs, or for rescue and adoption by City recognized rescue organizations.”

Ensure: Authorized Wildlife Custodians and Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Organizations are able to respond to the needs of wildlife as it relates to a No Feeding Wildlife By Law (such as the potential for starvation of established non migrating Canada Geese and mallards in city parks during harsh winter conditions).

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee fully supports a No Feeding Wildlife Bylaw for the City of London as a progressive action to promote **both** public and wildlife health, safety, and welfare, and to better reflect the City of London’s Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy.

The unintentional, or intentional feeding of wildlife provides for attractants which bring wildlife and people into close contact, results in increased interaction between humans, their pets, and property leading to undesirable consequences for all. Under these conditions, wildlife lose their natural fear of humans e.g. coyotes in residential areas, Experts on the behavior of wildlife advise that the feeding of wildlife is the leading cause of negative interactions between humans, their pets, and wildlife and disrupts the natural processes of wildlife such as migration and foraging behavior. A No Feeding Wildlife Bylaw would **strengthen** London’s Property Standards and by law intended to avoid the mass feeding of wildlife. A good example of this is the continued feeding of Canada Geese and Mallards in London parks and golf courses in spite of City signage to discourage this practice. The feeding of wildlife is not endorsed or supported by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources due to the adverse effects to both humans and to wildlife as a result of this behavior.

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, through research on this issue, advises that public education regarding the adverse effects for wildlife and for the public needs to be at the fore front of introducing such a bylaw. Further, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee recommends that a No Feeding Wildlife Bylaw and strong action on raising public awareness will assist the City and Londoners to avoid human wildlife conflicts and risks to health, welfare, and safety of wildlife, people, pets and property.

Reference to wildlife as “pests or as nuisance” as part of a no feeding wildlife bylaw should be avoided to promote public responsibility and awareness of human caused attractants and property standard issues that bring wildlife into close proximity or conflict with humans.

Avoiding such language promotes a more respectful approach to wildlife in and surrounding the city and as it relates to London’s progressive Humane Urban Wildlife Conflict Policy and shifts the responsibility to citizens to maintain property standards and avoid the intentional or unintentional feeding of wildlife.