

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee would like to make the following recommendation:

City of London Environmentally Significant Areas and City of London Parks consider:

Signage to be located in ESA's and parks where hand feeding occurs most prominently regarding the adverse effects for both water fowl and to the environment. The purpose of this recommendation is to:

- Empower the public to consider the harm to waterfowl, other wildlife, fauna waterways, and to the environment overall
- Provide an effective tool through the use of such signage, to address the artificially inflated population of waterfowl and environmental consequences
- To enhance the welfare of wildlife in our city by discouraging feeding
- Reduce human wildlife encounters
- Assist our community with the enjoyment of wildlife in ways that reduce harm and increase the ability to co-flourish

Background information:

Water fowl have evolved biologically and with patterns of habitat use, migration, and foraging that support optimal health, perpetuation of the species, and survival. These preservation patterns are passed to each succeeding generation.

In Northern climates such as ours, accessibility, quantity, and quality of marsh grasses and grassland plants are severely reduced, thus each year, birds complete fall migration to wintering grounds, and return in the spring.

Water fowl may delay migration or forgo migration cycle due to human feeding.

Urban environments can provide sufficient food for small populations, however as thousands of waterfowl concentrate in these areas because of handouts. As a direct result, road and runway safety may be compromised by waterfowl as they move through traffic areas. Waterfowl often come into conflict with humans in defense of offspring, or close proximity to humans. The city must contend with complaints from the public regarding the safety, and human health consequences of supporting ever growing waterfowl populations. The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee has received a letter from a London constituent, having expressed concerns regarding the feeding of human foods, and the harmful effects for our urban wildlife observed in the City of London Parks.

“The Human future depends on our ability to combine the knowledge of science with wisdom of wildness” Charles Lindbergh. This quote speaks to need to find lasting and effective ways to protect and support the wildlife and flora that sustain healthy communities, and acknowledges to need to understand natural history and ecology in order to find long term solutions.

Adverse effects of feeding waterfowl:

- Disrupts natural and biological processes, migration
- Artificially inflates the population
- Health and Safety harmful effects to both humans and water fowl
- High concentration of zoonosis increases disease transmission between birds and through the water supply.
- Hand feeding leads to orphaned goslings, signets, ducklings as mass numbers of birds scramble for the handouts.
- Anthropomorphic foods are most often provided such as bread, popcorn provide no nutrition, can create blockages internally, and lead to mortality.
- Overcrowding, competition for handouts, lack of nutrition in the food, harsh weather combine to an increase in their susceptibility to life threatening diseases like avian cholera, duck plague, and avian botulism. The fact that these consequences may kill of large populations of birds is not humane.
- Wildlife rehabilitators receive calls annually regarding birds trapped in ice and increases the need for high risk rescue.
- Feeding and mass feeding of waterfowl degrades natural areas, brings birds of prey, wild canids, and other wildlife to the feeding area and into conflict with humans.

- Excess nutrients from droppings, handouts, may result in water quality problems such as noxious algal blooms in summer months.
- The end result of seemingly kind and generous acts of feeding waterfowl can be a continuing cycle.
- Feeding waterfowl inflates the population artificially, and may lead to complaint to take more lethal or drastic measures to address the issue and bring the public into conflict over issues of ethical animal welfare.
- Wildlife do not require our help to find food, nature will support only what it can feed and shelter.

Conclusion:

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee recommends that signage which provides key information regarding the harm to wildlife and ecosystems as it relates to feeding waterfowl as well as education regarding progressive ways to enjoy wildlife viewing while protecting natural areas, human and wildlife health, welfare, and safety.