

Frequently Asked Questions - Feathered Friends -



I thought we were supposed to encourage wildlife on our properties?

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If I stop feeding them, will they be able to survive?

Is it okay to feed abandoned babies?

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I thought we were supposed to encourage wildlife on our properties?

Encouraging wildlife to your property is something you should do, BUT it needs to be done in a healthy manner. By feeding or otherwise encouraging large populations of waterfowl to one's property and encouraging the waterfowl to remain is not producing a healthy population – it is producing an artificially large population that has negative impacts on the overall ecosystem. To find out why this is undesirable, check out the [Waterfowl Impacts](#) page.

How dangerous can geese and swans be to people and pets?

Geese and swans can both be aggressive towards people and other animals (including pets and other waterfowl), especially when they are nesting or protecting their brood. They have been known to aggressively charge people and their pets, even biting them at times. While a goose bite might startle you more than anything, swans are very large birds and attack by one could result in an injury to people or pets. Try to stay away from obviously aggressive waterfowl, especially if you know they have a nest nearby.

If I stop feeding them, will they be able to survive?

Waterfowl are wild creatures with wild instincts. While they enjoy a free handout as much as anyone else, when they realize that you are no longer going to feed them, their instincts will generally kick in and they will survive just fine by foraging on their own.

Is it okay to feed abandoned babies?

Although baby birds and other animals are cute and cuddly-looking, please avoid feeding abandoned or orphaned animals you find! More than likely the young animal has not been abandoned. These natural creatures will have no trouble learning to find food on their own does NOT need help. Feeding a baby animal actually makes them dependent on you and less likely to be able to survive on their own in the wild. It also encourages them to remain (and poop) on your property. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources provides information on what to do if you find an [abandoned or orphaned animal](#).

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Are there any wildlife that are okay to feed?

Seeing wildlife up close on your property can bring great joy, and there are many ways you can help support native species and encourage them to visit your property. It is important for their health, however, that feeding these species relies as much as possible on their native food sources. Using [native plants](#) in your landscape can draw a variety of birds and other land animals by providing foods they naturally enjoy. Natural [shorelines](#) will not only deter nuisance waterfowl, but they can help support native fish populations. Feel free to fill your bird feeders and offer them a variety of seeds. The Audubon Society provides some great [tips on feeding birds](#) and [types of birdseed to use](#).

Should I worry about my kids playing in an area that has waterfowl droppings?

Yes, as a parent you should do your best to keep children away from areas heavily covered in droppings. Contact with waterfowl droppings can put you at risk for a number of health-related issues. Waterfowl poop, specifically that of geese, may contain parasites that cause gastrointestinal problems and/or bacteria like *E. coli*. If you come into contact with waste, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before coming into contact with your face or other people. Thoroughly wash any shoes, feet, or clothes that come into contact with droppings as well.

How can I clean up waterfowl poop in my yard?

If you own a pet, you know the most important part of scooping the poop is proper disposal. The same is true for cleaning up waterfowl poop on your shoreline, yard, or pier - make sure you are disposing of the droppings properly. Don't sweep or wash them from your lawn or pier into the water - that's just adding more nutrients and bacteria to the lake or stream! Instead, scoop the droppings and throw them in the trash, flush them down the toilet, bury them in the yard, or put them in an underground pet waste digester. Many of the same resources that are helpful for scooping pet poop can be used when scooping waterfowl poop as well!

- [Pet Waste Management Products](#)
- [Pet Waste Removal Companies](#)

What's the best way to discourage waterfowl from my yard?

There are several ways to discourage waterfowl from your yard. First, never, ever feed them! If you are already feeding the waterfowl, STOP NOW! Waterfowl, especially Canada geese, prefer beaches or short, mown shorelines so they can watch out for predators. Create a barrier/buffer along your shoreline by planting taller native grasses, flowers, or shrubs. Barriers can also be created with rocks or fence. To learn more about planting a shoreline with native plants visit the [Clear Choices Clean Water Native Plants Shoreline page](#). Waterfowl can also be deterred using several other methods such as scaring them away, using chemical repellants, removing nesting materials and eggs, or hunting them. The latter two items require permits/licenses and must be performed in compliance with state and federal regulations. Visit [Detering Waterfowl](#) for more information on these methods.

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Don't swans keep geese away?

No. While geese populations may decrease initially with swans present, the geese will eventually return and both species will live together in unity. In fact, swans on a body of water often indicate to a gaggle of flying geese that there is plenty of food below.

Am I allowed to hunt nuisance waterfowl?

Canada geese and ducks can be hunted in compliance with state and federal regulations during the [regular waterfowl season from November to February, with specific dates varying annually](#). There is also a special early hunting season for geese that typically runs the first two weeks of September. Mute Swans are a federally protected bird and currently do not have a regulated hunting season, so refrain from hunting them! If a swan becomes a nuisance on your property, you can contact the [IDNR Division of Fish and Wildlife](#) for assistance with control.

If I find a nest can I get rid of it?

If you notice a pair of geese or swans building a nest on your property, you can remove the nesting material on a daily basis in order to encourage them to build elsewhere. Because both swans and geese are federally protected species once the nest is complete with eggs, it is illegal to disturb it without permission from the Indiana DNR and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Currently, resident Canada Geese are the only species whose nests and eggs can be destroyed by individuals. For more information on or how to register for permission to destroy eggs/nests, check out these resources:

- [Egg and Nest Destruction - Egg Oiling Method](#)
- [Registration Site for Destroying Canada Goose Nests and Eggs](#)

Should I be worried about ALL kinds of waterfowl?

Most kinds of waterfowl, including resident and migratory ducks, do not present a significant threat to water quality or human health. The primary concern is with overly large populations of Canada Geese, Mute Swans (which are not native to Indiana), and domestic or Mallard ducks.