

Critter Corner - Honk if you*

Fifty years ago in the '60s Canada geese (it's Canada, not Canadian) were more often heard than seen, honking their way south in the flying Vs on their fall migration and on the way north in March as a harbinger of spring. That all changed 50 years ago as the geese were introduced into parts of the East where they had not been native, when increasing amounts of agricultural lands created much more food for them, and they learned it wasn't necessary to fly south to find food and open water for the winter. Wildlife agencies estimate that there are 7 million Canada geese in North America, and some of my neighbors on the lake claim that a lot of them are in their yards. Now, anyone with a level lawn/ beach on Keuka Lake can get geese. The average goose eats 4 pounds of vegetation (grass, seaweed) a day, and they poop out 2 messy pounds of it. Every day.



This scenario exemplifies your typical goose heaven. A closely mowed lawn (grass to eat plus easy to walk on and see potential enemies, like dogs) right next to a large body of water. A great place to build a nest for the goslings, eat, bask in the sun when not eating, bedroom, and a handy toilet. And, geese return to the place they were raised to eat, rest, poop, and to produce and raise even more geese.

So, here many of us are 50 years later with an annual, summer-long, and very messy problem on our hands. What to do?

In the past, hunting helped thin out goose populations, and it is legal to hunt geese (during the legal season) on Keuka Lake. Problem is, there are many fewer hunters than 50 years ago, many more geese, and the fact that shooting a few geese out of an annually recurring flock of 100 or more on your lawn/beach doesn't make much of a dent.

Municipalities with established goose problems may receive permission for professionals to oil the eggs of nesting geese—this prevents the eggs from breathing and results in nesting failure. This option is not available to homeowners, and of course it does nothing to prevent geese raised somewhere else from dropping in to dine and dump.

Scare crows/scare owls? Don't bother.

Harassing/hazing the geese? Your neighbors will object to the loud explosions of shotguns and other noise-makers. Your dogs will get tired of being on call 24/7. And they always come back. When you're not home.

The solutions, fortunately, are simple and effective. Never feed geese. Don't get them started. Geese, especially those with young, prefer to walk up on land from bodies of water to feed. Most people will not want to stop mowing their lands to let them grow so tall that they form a barrier to geese. But fences are incredibly effective and they don't have to be extensive. Simply erecting a fence of two fishing lines 8 and 20 inches above the ground along the shoreline will prevent geese from using your lawn/beach. Place posts to hold the fishing line about every 3-6 feet. It helps to attach flagging to the lines so geese can see the lines better, but not necessary. If your beach is contiguous with a neighbor's, make sure they also put up a fence. That's it!

* Want to get rid of those pesky geese on your waterfront yard/beach