

PMLA Canada Geese Deterrent Methods and Outcomes

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Canada geese have made PML their full and parttime home. Some choose to migrate in the winter, but most stay because there is plentiful food and they are protected from hunting in our community. Regardless of our efforts to reduce the population through non-lethal hazing, depredation and other methods, their numbers have increased to a point that they have become both a nuisance and potential threat to the health and safety of our member and guests.

This article provides a list of the various methods and outcomes of our efforts. While some methods have proven successful, the outcome has been temporary in all cases. Even so, we are revisiting many of these methods in an effort to keep the geese away from our Marina, beach areas and Golf Course during the summer.

Given the increase in the Canada geese population over the years the PML Board of Directors has enlisted the assistance of our Lake Management consultant, Dr. Stephen McCord. Dr. McCord has a lot of experience in the management of lake operations specifically related to wildlife, water quality, regulatory reporting and compliance. Dr. McCord has been tasked with reviewing all of our previous geese hazing and management methods and coming up with other options and recommendations. At the June 18th Board meeting he gave a presentation on our efforts and planning for the future. A copy of the presentation is on the PML Official website on our Canada Geese Management page for members to review.

Given that all non-lethal methods have been unsuccessful, the Board is considering conducting a take or cull to reduce the population. We are evaluating the use of a professional guide and licensed hunters to harvest the geese during hunting season in limited areas, in a safe manner, with as little impact to the membership as possible.

The Board has scheduled a town hall meeting at the Lake Lodge on Saturday, August 27th at 9 a.m. to continue to inform the membership and get direct feedback on this idea.

Given that the geese are overrunning our Marina operation now, we are already implementing a lot of the non-lethal methods of hazing and deterrents to do everything we can to run them out of the area until we can utilize more impactful methods. Everything is on the table to resolve this issue.

The following is information on previous methods used and the outcomes:

PML Waterfowl Management Committee

Back in 2011 the Association formed a committee of volunteer members to work on ways to control the resident Canada geese population in PML. The Committee researched and came up with many ideas on how to reduce the number of Canada geese in our community. The Committee members helped our lake limnologist and staff oil and addle eggs and conducted other geese deterrent efforts. The Committee was assigned to track the Canada geese by location and numbers and conduct other geese hazing activities.

These efforts did not last, as years went by with no real reduction in the Canada geese population in PML. In fact, the numbers were increasing. Waterfowl Management Committee members stopped attending meetings and we saw a decline in committee membership. Ultimately the original committee was disbanded due to the lack of member interest in volunteering to serve on the committee.

The Association tried to re-establish the committee in recent years, but this effort was ended as not enough members applied to even form a committee.

Using member-owned dogs to haze Canada geese

One of the methods that the PML Waterfowl Management Committee used to haze Canada geese was PML member-owned dogs. The Committee researched and found that some other agencies reported success by contracting with professional vendors who use well-trained border collies to chase and haze geese. The Committee met with a dog trainer/hazing service contractor who specialized in Border collie geese hazing, to learn the basics of Canada geese hazing with dogs.

PML initiated a volunteer dog hazing program where members could sign up, take a short class and then they were issued a bright identification vest for the member volunteer and a vest for their dogs. It was noted that none of the member-owned dogs were border collies, but the Committee thought that the predator reaction in the geese would cause them to leave nevertheless.

The program was initiated and PML members could sign up with their dogs and commit to times where they would patrol the Golf Course and areas around the Lake. Members were instructed to keep their dog on a leash for control and safety.

Outcome

Many PML members began to sign up for the program even though they had no real interest in hazing geese, they just wanted to the ability to take their dog into areas that were normally off limits. Some of the members who signed up for the dog hazing program refused to follow the rules and guidelines provided. These members also ignored the leash law and training that was provided.

Geese hazing program members were not actively and consistently hazing geese, but were choosing to play with their dogs in areas where dogs were not normally allowed. There were conflicts between the dogs and their owners and children and parents in the swim areas and beaches. Some of the dog hazing program participants did not clean up after their dogs when they defecated on the lawns at Dunn Court and the Marina. Other program participants allowed their dogs to urinate on the trees, lawns and other areas where other members with children played and this presented a health and safety issue.

The dog hazing program was ultimately suspended after an incident on the Golf Course resulted in complaints to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. A member of the dog patrol allowed their German Sheppard to chase deer from the Golf Course, into and through neighboring member properties. The dog reportedly chased a deer through a neighboring member's property knocking over and damaging furniture and other items. The member victim reported that the German Sheppard also snapped at his small dog and the deer it was chasing almost collided with a passing vehicle. The member threatened to file a lawsuit against the Association for the actions of the dog hazing program volunteer.

After the incident was reported to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the enforcement officer showed up at our Administration Office to let us know that they received multiple complaints of alleged violations of State Fish and Wildlife regulations. It is illegal to allow a dog to "run" deer and chase them. The program was shut down due to these on-going control and safety issues with dog hazing program volunteers and the threat of litigation.

Shortly thereafter, the Waterfowl Management Committee was disbanded due to the lack of committee members and interest by the membership.

Green laser pointer lights

We purchased a green laser pointer to test out for geese hazing. Some golf courses have reported success with this type of deterrent.

Outcome

It was sold as a light that could be used in the daytime, but this did not work effectively. The geese were not startled over the light during the daytime. It was tested near the ponds at the Golf Course where geese normally feed. When it started getting dark, the geese left for the lake and other areas where they felt safe.

Even if we were to try and continue to use this method, we do not have the staffing available to provide this type of hazing on the daily basis. Regardless, it was found to be ineffective.

Floating and stationary LED lights for the Golf Course ponds and lawn areas

We evaluated the use of the "Away with Geese" LED light units and determined that they would not be effective as the geese do not rest at the ponds at night. They head for open water at the Lake and other areas. The lights are expensive (\$400 plus) and subject to theft and/or vandalism.

Live Swans

The Association purchased and introduced two live swans as they are territorial and the thought was that they would chase the geese away from areas at the Lake. Over time we have increased the number of swans.

Outcome

While the swans will get aggressive and attack some geese during nesting season or when they are competing for food, they are not very effective in reducing the overall resident geese population to the degree that it is impactful. Individuals have been hand feeding the swans and as a result we have had reports that they become aggressive towards humans as the expectation is that they will be fed.

The Goosinator

The Goosinator is a radio-controlled unit that was made of stiff foam, painted bright fluorescent Orange and black and shaped like a wolf. It would skid across grass and water driven by a propeller. The Waterfowl Management Committee recommended it for purchase and implementation. The unit cost over \$3K.

Outcome

We purchased and used the unit at the Marina and while it would chase the geese out of the area, the effect was temporary and the geese would fly a short distance to the other side of the Marina where they would start feeding. Over time, the geese became used to it and would only fly short distances while they were being chased. Even though the Goosinator had limited success, we are working on replacing the old unit to actively haze this summer.

Bird bangers and Bird sparkler shots

These are pyrotechnic shots that are used with a plastic launch pistol. The shooter aims for an area with a group of geese and the projectile is launched and then explodes near the geese or emits a whistling sound with sparklers.

Outcome

We tried the bird bangers and bird sparkler shots at both the Marina and Golf Course. The sound made by these projectiles when they exploded sound like gunshots. This startled members at neighboring properties and at the amenities. Since we were using them early in the morning or later at dusk when the geese were feeding, it really annoyed a lot of members. When they were used during the day, it startled and frightened members on both the Golf Course and the Marina even though we made announcements about what we were doing. Regardless, they were ineffective as the geese became used to them and simply flew or waddled a short distance away to continue feeding.

Goose predator audio system

Golf Course maintenance staff purchased an audio system that emits goose predator calls and deployed it around the pond on #9 fairway.

Outcome

The audio predator calls had little to no effect. The geese quickly got used to it and ignored the audio deterrent. Even so, we are looking at units with better reviews and plan to purchase and deploy these at the Marina. The Marina has a smaller area than the Golf Course and we want to determine if a different unit in another location will have a positive impact.

Grape seed extract spray

PML Maintenance purchased a liquid goose deterrent that is sprayed on lawns and turf. The manufacturer reports that the geese can see the spray as it is visible in their spectrum and that the taste causes them to stop eating the grass.

Outcome

The geese continued to eat the grass even though it was sprayed with the liquid deterrent. It did however give them diarrhea and this made an almost impossible mess to clean up. Even so, we have purchased a different brand of non-toxic chemical spray that we are going to test at Dunn Court and a small area at the Marina. We are including a UV dye that is visible to the geese to see if it will deter them from eating the grass.

Egg addling and oiling

PML secured the proper permits for egg addling and oiling to reduce the goose population in a humane way. We have used this method for many years.

Outcome

Early on egg oiling and addling was seen to be reducing or at least stabilizing the Canada goose population in PML. Over time the geese have become wary and have adapted. They are now hiding nests on private property around the lake and other areas that are extremely difficult to find. When we have identified some of these locations and have approached the property owners, most have refused to allow us to enter the property to get to the eggs. There are varying reasons, mostly because they like to have the geese and do not care how they impact other members.

Ovo-control sterilizing pellets

We contracted with a company called Ovo-Control who sell bird sterilization units. We deployed their automatic feeding units in areas where geese normally congregate. First the units put out grain to attract the geese and then the sterilizing pellets are deployed.

Outcome

The geese never got used to the units. We ended up feeding a lot of deer however.

Radio control car with fox tail

Our Golf Maintenance staff outfitted a heavy-duty, fast radio-controlled car with a foxtail and began using it to chase geese.

Outcome

At first it really startled the geese and they flew off. Over time they got used to it and only flew a short distance away and continued to feed on the course turf. This is another situation where we would have to keep an employee onsite all day doing nothing but chasing geese. Regardless, we continue to use the unit as needed even though the effects are temporary.

Radio control boats

Golf Maintenance began using a radio-controlled boat to chase the geese of the ponds on 1 and 9.

Outcome

The geese got used to it and started flying short distances, but still continued feeding on course turf. This is another situation where we would have to keep an employee onsite all day doing nothing but chasing geese. Again, we continue to use the unit as needed even though the effects are temporary.

Hazing with golf carts

Our staff tried chasing the geese with golf carts.

Outcome

It would startle the geese at first, but then they simply walked out of the way or flew a short distance to continue feeding.

Owl effigy

We purchased lifelike owl decoys and placed them in areas frequented by geese.

Outcome

The geese ignored them even though we moved them around and mounted them so that they would move in the wind. We have purchased more of these decoys and will be trying alternative methods of deployment and staging to see if they have an effect.

Coyote/dog silhouette

We purchased the coyote and dog silhouettes/decoys and placed them in areas frequented by geese.

Outcome

The geese ignored them even though we moved them around and mounted them so that they would move in the wind

Coyote 3-D Decoy

We purchased the coyote 3-D Decoy that looks like a crouching coyote ready to pounce and placed it in areas frequented by geese at both the Marina and Golf Course.

Outcome

The geese ignored them even though we moved them around and mounted them so that they would move in the wind. They attracted small children at the Marina who liked to play with them and tried to run off with them. We have purchased some new decoys and will be trying alternative methods of deployment and staging to see if they have an effect. We are also including some signage to let folks know that they are not toys.

Bird-X Scare-Eye bird repellent predator eyes balloon

We purchased scare-eye balloons and placed them in areas frequented by geese.

Outcome

The geese ignored them even though we moved them around and mounted them so that they would move in the wind. We have purchased more of these decoys and will be trying alternative methods of deployment and staging to see if they have an effect.

Anti-feeding signage

Staff purchase and even fabricated several different types of signs that say specifically "do not feed the geese or other waterfowl".

Outcome

The signs are largely ignored. Members and guests continue to feed the geese and wildlife.

Plastic fencing

Our Marina staff has deployed orange plastic fencing from one end of the Marina to the other every evening and then they would remove it in the morning during opening.

Outcome

The geese would fly in and around it and walk or swim around it to get to the lawn area to feed after the staff went home.

High tensile wire line strung around the golf course ponds

Golf Maintenance installed wire 6 inches off the ground around the perimeter of the pond to keep the geese from accessing the water. The ponds are areas of safety for the geese and they feel comfortable feeding there.

Outcome

The geese flew into the ponds. The installation of the wire fencing was very labor intensive and did not work.

Windmill decoys

We purchased and installed these windmill goose deterrent units as they were reported to scare geese as they moved with the wind.

Outcome

The geese ignored them and continued feeding in the area.