

harm duck and goose populations whenever they feed these wild animals. Brukner Nature Center recommends that people do not feed waterfowl for the following reasons:

- **Overpopulation:** many urban environments can provide resources for small populations of waterfowl concentrated in areas because of easy handouts; many lose their fear of people and adopt habits that conflict with humans. Of increasing concern is the effect of overpopulation on parks, forest preserves, golf courses and residential lawns, where large populations of birds graze, trample and defecate on the grass. Excess nutrients in ponds caused by waterfowl droppings may also result in water quality problems, such as noxious algal blooms in the summertime.
- **Spread of disease:** food handouts often result in large numbers of birds competing for very limited food supplies in a small, concentrated area. Such crowding combined with the stresses of less nutritious food and harsh weather can increase the onset of disease and infection. An infected bird may spread disease to other birds by infecting the water supply. When the birds are scattered over a large area, this does not pose a serious problem. However, when the birds are bunched together in urban areas, their chances of contracting diseases increase, and the result may be disastrous.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS**

During the summer, waterfowl can succumb to botulism poisoning. The disease is frequently confined to a few ponds. Outbreaks do not place humans at risk, but they can endanger any pets that may choose to eat or drink at affected sites. To avoid any problems, always keep your pets indoors or on a leash. Canada geese and mallards can carry intestinal parasites that have the potential to cause diseases in humans, however, this can only occur if a bird's fecal material is accidentally ingested. Practicing good hygiene and watching toddlers carefully are usually sufficient actions to prevent any problems.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

*If you find a wild animal and are concerned, leave it alone and call Brukner Nature Center at 937-698-6493, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.*



5995 Horseshoe Bend Rd.

Troy, OH 45373

[www.bruknernaturecenter.com](http://www.bruknernaturecenter.com)

*Brukner Nature Center is a non-profit, privately funded organization promoting the appreciation and understanding of wildlife conservation through preservation, education, and rehabilitation.*

*The purpose of our wildlife rehabilitation program is to educate people regarding the natural history of Ohio's wildlife, to offer help and advice when wildlife and people conflict, and to care for, rehabilitate, and release native Ohio wildlife expected to survive in their natural environment.*

# Living with **WATER- FOWL**

## in Miami County



# Brukner Nature Center

## NATURAL HISTORY

### *Mallards*

Mallards will typically migrate south during the winter, looking for open water. During mild Ohio winters they may stay year round. Mallards are seasonally monogamous, switching mates each year.



Prior to laying her eggs, the female will increase her weight so that she can incubate the eggs. On average, seven to ten eggs are laid with an incubation period of approximately 23 days. The male leaves after the first week of incubation to join the male flocks. The female is responsible for raising the young and usually only produces one brood a year. After the last egg hatches, the female takes her young to water within 24 hours. This trip can be up to one mile. The young are able to fly within 42 to 60 days. The female is known to return to successful nesting sites. If you find a duckling, contact Brukner Nature Center for advice on reuniting mallards.

### *Canada Geese*

A flock of Canada geese consists of either family groups or groups of families, depending on the time of the year. They travel in groups that can range from a single mated pair to many hundreds of birds. In flight, the Canada goose is often identified by its characteristic honking. Often the geese fly in a highly symmetrical V-formation, which is thought to cut down wind resistance for the birds at the rear. The lead position is shared by adults that trade off during flight.



Canada geese mate for life and usually arrive at the breeding grounds as mated pairs. Courtship and fighting between the males, or ganders, will still occur, however. To repel an adversary, the gander approaches with his neck held horizontally and bill open while uttering hissing sounds. Once the standoff is over, the victorious gander returns to the female, and they both make sinuous neck movements in celebration of his triumph.

Geographic area and weather both affect the onset of nest building. Geese often build their nests on the ground near water, especially in low-lying areas prone to flooding. On occasion they have been known to nest on elevated sites on rocky ledges or above muskrat mounds or lodges. Geese lay an average of four to seven creamy-white eggs that hatch after 28 days of incubation. The young leave the nest within 24 hours and usually fly within 60 to 80 days.

Goslings occasionally get separated from the brood on their way to water after hatching. If you find a gosling, a few simple steps can be taken to reunite or foster the gosling with its own species.

- Find a pond with goslings of similar size
- Distract the parent
- Place the gosling near other goslings at the pond
- Walk away immediately and observe from a distance to see if the gosling has been accepted.

Reuniting or fostering efforts need to be done within 24 hours of finding the lost gosling to prevent imprinting. Humans can never provide the same level of care as the real parent, and it is always best to have young raised by their own species. However, if reuniting is unsuccessful, Brukner Nature Center does accept Canada geese for rehabilitation.

## RECOMMENDED DETERRENTS FOR WATERFOWL

Manicured lawns, subdivision retention ponds, industrial and business complexes and golf courses provide excellent habitats for Canada geese. Conflicts with humans usually arise during the summer months when the birds may aggressively defend their young when threatened. They may hiss or chase people who get too close to the nest or flock.

Many deterrent products or techniques do not work or will only last a short period of time. These include plastic or live swans, fake alligators in a pond, brightly colored streamers or balloons, or methyl anthranilate, an additive to powdered grape drink and grape soda that irritates their skin. For a

long-term solution, landscaping with native plants is recommended for open spaces and the perimeter of ponds. Trees and bushes in yards and tall grass plantings around ponds add natural beauty and provide hiding places for predators. Using landscaping to decrease open space makes the area less attractive to geese.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

All native birds, including waterfowl, are protected by the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It is illegal for any person to possess birds, dead or alive, nesting material, eggs, feathers or bones of a bird without proper permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Ohio. It is illegal to harm or kill a protected bird species, and it is illegal to remove or destroy nesting material from a nest once an egg is laid without proper permit.

It is illegal to keep wild animals, even for a very short time. They have specialized nutritional, housing and handling needs that you are unlikely to be able to provide. Inexperienced individuals who attempt to raise or treat them, inevitably produce unhealthy or tame animals that cannot survive in their normal habitats.

Never move young from the nest

Do not use poisons. They are inhumane and may be illegal.

They can also result in secondary poisoning of raptors, wild scavengers and neighboring pets.



## HARMFUL EFFECTS TO FEEDING DUCKS AND GEESE

For centuries, waterfowl have sought out and fed on highly nutritious marsh and grassland plants. These preservation patterns are passed on to each succeeding generation. Survival of waterfowl ultimately depends upon their ability to make use of naturally occurring food and habitat. Humans, however, disrupt these patterns and