

Over the centuries waterfowl have developed patterns of seeking out and feeding on highly nutritious marsh and grassland plants. These preservation patterns are passed on to each succeeding generation. Not all waterfowl, however, complete their migratory cycle when they are sidetracked to feed and rest in landscaped park settings found in many urban environments (not unlike our own Kerr and Kardon Parks!). In these settings, the birds are fed by people who unknowingly are enticing them to delay their migration and often into becoming permanent residents. Many urban parks / ponds can support small populations of waterfowl. However, as thousands of waterfowl concentrate in areas because handouts are non-threatening and easily attainable, the once wild birds can soon become tame, lose their fear of most things people-related and pick up habits that conflict with the human population and the birds natural pattern of migration.

Food handouts often result in large numbers of birds competing for very limited food supplies in small concentrated areas. Such crowding and competition for food combined with the stresses of less nutritious food and harsh weather increases their susceptibility to life threatening diseases like avian cholera, duck plague and avian botulism. The end result of this seemingly kind and generous act of feeding waterfowl can be a continuing cycle of the birds becoming nuisances and being subjected to harmful diseases. An infected bird may spread the disease to many 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 (just as they are in Downingtown's limited lakes area) their chances of contracting disease increase and the result may be disastrous.

Most people enjoy and appreciate waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, since these are majestic birds of amiable temperament. However, the human activity of feeding the waterfowl in an attempt to nurture the birds has detrimental environmental and ecological consequences, as seen in fouled park areas and degraded water quality. Humans must prepare to interact with waterfowl and other wildlife in ways that are non-interfering with their natural patterns.

If you care for waterfowl, you can do something to help them retain their "wildness" and maintain their well-being...Stop Feeding Them & Preserve the Spirit of America by allowing waterfowl to stay wild...observe and appreciate them from a distance.