

Living With Wildlife

As development continues to grow in town, residents are finding themselves coming in closer contact with wild animals. The two species people are having the most conflict with are Canada geese and beavers. As wild habitat diminishes we need to find a way to co-habitate with these species.

Human-geese conflicts occur due to the fact that geese congregate in large numbers and deposit a significant amount of fecal matter on waterfront lawns. People exacerbate the situation by feeding waterfowl, especially breads, cakes, and junk food. This in turn aggravates the waterfowl's digestive systems and creates more fecal deposition. Waterfowl should not be fed at all but if you feel impelled to feed these creatures, feed them vegetables and leafy greens. Tolerance is key to living with this species but there are ways you can deter waterfowl from using your property as their lavatory. Vegetative management, the use of tall grasses or other naturally occurring vegetation planted along the water's edge will discourage waterfowl from landing on your shoreline. Fences will also dissuade waterfowl from settling on your land.

There is an even bigger conflict between beavers and humans. Beavers are the world's greatest builders of wetlands and in turn sometimes cause flooding and property damage. Because beavers cause flooding, people do not think they can live with them but people do not realize the benefits beaver ponds provide. Beaver ponds actually improve water quality by acting as settling basins and control flooding by slowing water movement. Contrary to popular belief, trapping is not an effective means of controlling the beaver population and will, in fact, stimulate the production of more young. Where flooding is an issue, there are devices called bafflers, deceivers, levelers, etc. designed to control water levels without removing or destroying the beavers. If you are coming into conflict with beavers, please contact your local Board of Health for guidance.

The key is to work with nature, not against it. Every creature plays its own important role in the circle of life though we may not always understand its purpose. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 978-649-2300 ext. 116.

~ Lori Capone, Conservation Agent~