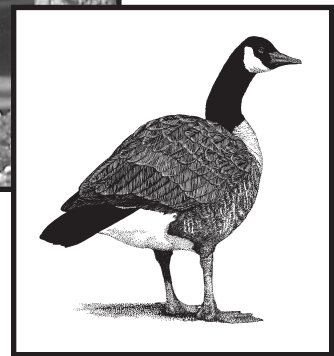


Division of Wildlife  
**GOOSE ATTACKS**



**GENERAL BACKGROUND  
INFORMATION ON ATTACKS**

Geese have adapted well to the ponds and well manicured lawns of urban habitats, which has placed people and geese in proximity to one another. This is especially apparent during the spring when geese aggressively defend their nesting territories. The Ohio Division of Wildlife has documented goose attacks on humans that have caused serious physical injury, such as broken bones and head injuries, and emotional distress. Many of these injuries have occurred when the person tried to avoid an attack and tripped over an object (e.g., stairs, curbs, etc.).

When fed by humans, geese tend to lose their natural fear of people. This lack of fear often leads to more violent attacks during the spring nesting season. In addition, when geese lose their fear they will begin nesting closer to areas that people frequent such as buildings, flower beds, parking lots, picnic tables, etc. People who have had a negative experience are more likely to be afraid of geese upon their next encounter, and often fall victim to attacking geese every time they come into contact with geese. For example, each spring many people are repeatedly attacked by geese nesting next to the entryway of a building they must enter. Individuals who are not afraid of geese usually have trouble understanding how

someone could possibly be afraid of a bird, but to the person who has been attacked and/or injured these threats are real.

**WHY DO GEESE ATTACK ME?  
WHY DON'T THEY LEAVE ME  
ALONE?**

Breeding instincts are among the strongest drives of animals. Canada geese usually start choosing mates and selecting a territory for nesting in late February to early March. The females start laying eggs anytime from mid-March to mid-May. Incubation by the female begins as soon as all her eggs are laid. The gander's job during nesting season is to defend the female, their nesting territory, and eggs. If a person or another goose enters the territory, the gander will usually give a warning call to the intruder before chasing it away. Some geese can be very aggressive and will only stop their attack when the intruder has left or the goose's life is threatened.



## Goose Attacks



### WHAT TO DO IF A GOOSE ATTACKS

- Maintain direct eye contact and keep your chest and face pointed at the goose.
- If the goose acts aggressively, calmly and slowly back away, watching for obstacles.
- Maintain a neutral demeanor, i.e., do not act hostile or show fear.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A GOOSE ATTACKS ME?

Waterfowl have excellent vision. Geese seem to pay very close attention to the eyes and body language of humans and other animals. An encounter with an aggressive goose can usually be resolved if you maintain **direct eye contact** while facing your body directly towards the attacking goose. **Never** turn your back or shoulders away from the hostile goose, and **never** close or squint your eyes or block your eyes with a purse or briefcase. If the goose makes an aggressive move towards you while hissing or spreading out its wings, you should slowly back away while using your peripheral vision to watch for obstacles you could trip over. Maintain a **neutral** demeanor toward the goose (i.e., do not yell, swing, kick, or act hostile). At the same time, do not cower, hide your face, turn your back, or run from the goose. Over aggression may cause the female to join the confrontation which usually causes an even more aggressive attack from the male. If a goose flies up towards your face, then duck or move away at a 90 degree angle to the direction of flight, still facing the attacking goose.

## I AM A FACILITY MANAGER, WHAT CAN I DO?

First, you must stop all feeding of geese and take measures to keep the geese off of your property. If avoidance and harassment tactics have failed to discourage geese from nesting on your property, the Division of Wildlife can issue you a permit to remove the eggs, nest, and/or the offending geese. The landowner or facility manager must first contact your local Division of Wildlife District Office to procure this permit. District personnel will provide you the technical assistance you need to address your goose problem.

Prior to the action, the facility manager should notify all employees that the eggs, nest, and/or geese are being removed for the health and safety of all concerned. Some people will be in favor of the removal, some will be adamantly opposed. You will have a better chance of gaining their consent if you are up front and honest in your explanation. Everyone needs to understand the point of view of the people who are frightened by geese - the ones that will be attacked, several times per day, and who are traumatized just thinking about facing the geese.

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