



Featured Species Habitat Management Guidance for Canada Goose

Latin Name: *Branta canadensis*

Scope: Statewide

Rationale - *why we value the species and the problem for the species:*

The Canada goose is a valued game bird in Michigan. In 2012, 35,751 hunters spent 294,400 days afield pursuing geese (Frawley 2013). There are at least 10 well-established stakeholder groups that support and partner on goose management projects and nine wildlife areas that manage specifically for geese. Geese are not habitat-limited in Michigan; they have adapted well to agricultural, suburban, and urban areas and there is currently little concern about the numbers of geese that breed in Michigan. There are however distribution problems with geese. Suburban and urban areas are very attractive to geese because of abundant food and water, greater security from predators, and hunting closures. In 2013, 700 permits were issued to address nuisance geese, yet geese are still sought where they can be hunted. Approaches include habitat objectives and areas to both 1) encourage geese in priority geographic areas and landscapes, and 2) discourage geese where they are a nuisance.

Habitat Need - *the cause & effect relationship between habitat and species and its primary limiting habitat need:*

Canada geese graze primarily on grasses (Bellrose 1980). Mowed and grazed grasses produce more palatable, nutritious forage than taller, mature grasses and leave open areas from which predators can be more easily detected (Owen 1980). During migrations, waste grains from agricultural fields are a critical high-energy food. Open water serves as a refuge for geese; they nest and rear broods near water and during staging and migration, roost on open water. Canada geese are particularly attracted to sites where preferred foods are found adjacent to water.

Habitat Objectives - *the treatment or management to address the primary limiting habitat need:*

- 1) Attract geese to huntable areas during the fall season: (a) plant green browse such as winter wheat or rye; (b) after harvest leave the maximum possible amount of waste grain in agricultural fields; and (c) release roundup geese in suitable habitat accessible to hunters.
- 2) Discourage geese where they are a chronic nuisance by making the landscape un-attractive to geese: (a) maintain tall grass or shrubs between lawns and water; (b) where possible allow hunting; (c) consult with developers, landscape architects and contractors on how to incorporate goose un-friendly designs for housing, golf courses, and business developments; (d) make information available on how to design and maintain goose un-friendly landscapes; (e) release roundup geese where they are least likely to be a nuisance.

Priority Geographic Areas – *the specific geographic areas where we should focus management for the species:*

Encourage geese at the 8 WLD Project areas of Allegan SGA Fennville Farm Unit, AuTrain Basin SWMA, Baraga Plains SWA, Edgar WPA, Fish Point SWA, Lapeer SGA, Muskegon County Waste Water System, Shiawassee River SGA, and Sturgeon River Sloughs SWA. Discourage geese in the 3 counties of Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne - and other areas where they are a nuisance.

Priority Landscapes – *the landscape, setting, or cover-type where we should focus management within the areas above:*

- 1) Encourage geese on grasslands and agricultural fields associated with emergent wetlands, lakes, and rivers.
- 2) Discourage geese in areas where there are hunting closures and nuisance complaints.

Population Goal - *the goal for the species, its habitat, or a stakeholder's actions:*

- 1) Increase hunter satisfaction; 2) maintain Michigan breeding population of resident Canada geese between 175,000 and 225,000; and 3) reduce the number of nuisance permits issued.

Evaluation Method - *the monitoring method to measure progress towards the goal above:*

- 1) Annual hunter opinion and harvest surveys. 2a) Annual aerial spring breeding waterfowl surveys; and 2b) number of nuisance permits issued.

Incidental Species – *other species which may benefit from management for this species:*

eastern bluebird; eastern cottontail; and wild turkey.

References - *citation for documents referenced in this guidance:*

Bellrose, F.C. 1980. Ducks, geese, and swans of North America. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

Frawley, B. J., 2013. 2012 Waterfowl Harvest Survey - Wildlife Division Report No. 3575. Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Owen, M. 1980. Wild geese of the world: their life history and ecology. Batsford Ltd., Fakenham Press Ltd., Norfolk England.