

A Look At ...



FORCE OF NATURE — THE WHOLE TRUTH FROM AN INDEPENDENT PERSPECTIVE from
National Organization Responding Against HUJE that seek to harm the Green Space Industry (NORAHG)

Canada Geese

A Look At Bird Management

Operation Scarecrow

November 14th, 2011

Golf Course Industry

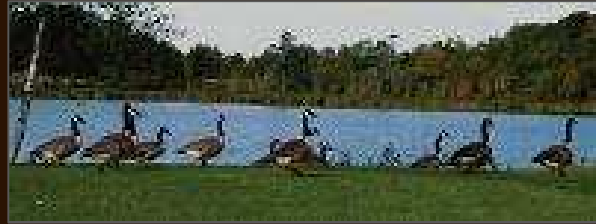
Oakfield Golf and Country Club

[Province of Nova Scotia]

Selected and adapted excerpts

Oakfield Golf and Country Club is located in Oakfield, Nova Scotia, Canada, along the east coast of Canada. Nova Scotia is known for its fresh water lakes and beautiful shore lines, and with a total population of 940,000, the province is relatively undeveloped. Oakfield Golf and Country Club is fortunate to be surrounded by wooded areas and is adjacent to the province's largest freshwater lake. The author, Adam Fletcher, is assistant superintendent.

Canada Geese



The team at Oakfield Golf and Country Club mounts a MULTI-PRONGED ATTACK TO DEAL WITH ITS GOOSE PROBLEMS.

As managers of the property, we attempt to integrate our management program with the abundant wildlife in the area.

While making decisions as turf managers, the consideration of the environment and wildlife around us often factors into achieving our goals, whether it be pest control product applications or clipping disposal.

Because golf is an outdoor game, and it requires a fair amount of space to play, there will always be a conflict between the flora and fauna and playability.

Canada Geese

Behaviour

One of the conflicts that we struggle with on a seasonal basis is the persistence with which Canada Geese frequent the property.

These migratory birds nest along the pond edges of the golf course and remain there until the time comes to fly south.

The birds mate for life and form broods that return to the same location to reproduce each year.

The young birds, unable to fly, seek shelter in the long grass and open water at night from predators.

During the day, the wide-open spaces of the course afford the geese the opportunity to see predators from a distance, and the proximity of the ponds allow for easy escape.

Add in the lush grass as a food supply, and the shade of a willow to rest under, you have the perfect goose-producing environment.



Canada Geese

Reduction in Level of Playing Conditions

Anyone who works in green space maintenance in Southern Canada or the Northern U.S. knows that Canada Geese can create several problems.

We have seen turf turned over on the greens, or tufts ripped out from their ever-present need for food.

They track through the freshly raked sand, and ruin the work of the bunker squad.

Intimidation Tactics and Attacks

The adults are fearless in their protection of the young, honking and hissing at any perceived threat in the area and in some cases, PHYSICALLY ATTACKING even grown men with their wings and beaks.



Canada Geese

Droppings

Aside from the intimidation tactics and the reduction in level of playing conditions, the most significant problem caused by the geese is more about what they leave behind.

An average goose can produce 1 to 2 pounds of droppings per day.

At last count the geese at Oakfield Golf and Country Club numbered in the eighties, all congregating around two green sites by the water.

In one week, that adds up to 560 pounds of droppings, left distributed — in oddly well-uniformed spacing — on every type of playing surface on the golf course.

Like any fecal matter, the droppings do have the potential to cause a HEALTH ISSUES in humans, more so in environments where contact with the droppings are more likely.

Beaches, parks, and golf courses are good examples of the types of outdoor spaces where transfer is quite possible and the droppings pose the greatest HEALTH RISK.

In addition to the bacterial issues, the droppings can become dense enough to actually become SLIPPERY, an important point when discussing pond edges and tees.



Canada Geese



Approaching the Problem

We approached the goose problem like we would with any pest on the golf course — from a cultural point of view.

We spent some time gathering information from the Internet about the habits of the geese and how the golf course might look appealing from their point of view.

We spoke with Canada Wildlife Service (CWS), a division of Environment Canada, which is the governing body in Canada responsible for gathering information pertaining to wildlife and maintaining wildlife regulations.

It seemed as though there were as many schemes and gadgets to rid us of geese as there were geese.

Loud Noises

A large portion of the suggestions involved a LOUD NOISE TO STARTLE THE GEESE, these ranged from predatory sounds to simulated shotgun blasts.

While these might work in a public park or beach, loud noises have a tendency to be frowned upon at the golf course.

At one point, I tried blowing a hockey whistle as hard as I could after wading into a group of geese on the 12th hole — the geese were NOT PHASED by the intrusion, only pausing briefly to raise their heads before returning to work.

The failure was compounded by a golfer on the 13th tee playfully shouting « *Offside !* »

Canada Geese

Physical Barriers

After much deliberation the « *Goose Committee* » decided on a three-stage defense and Operation Scarecrow was born.

Our first tactic would be to create a beach-head by the USE OF PHYSICAL BARRIERS at the most likely places of a water invasion.

We purchased six-hundred feet of plastic snow fence that was four feet tall and cut it down to two feet.

The fence was placed around the edge of the two ponds where we historically have the largest population of geese.

The fence was as close to the edge of the pond as possible and wire-tied to survey stakes driven into the banks roughly four feet apart.

The theory was that if the babies could not get over the fence, then the mothers would not leave them and the whole family would remain in the water.

The fence was put in place in the spring as soon as the ground had thawed enough to hammer the stakes in.



Canada Geese

Silhouettes

The second stage would be to prevent an aerial attack.

We purchased three EAGLE SILHOUETTES and made other flags that were suggested to us from Canada Wildlife Service (CWS).

The eagle silhouettes were mounted on 18-foot pole with a swivel that gave the appearance of « *fly-ing* ».

The flags were made of black material — we used filter cloth — cut into strips 5 feet by 2 feet.

Two T-bars are driven into the ground 2 feet apart and the strip of cloth is fastened to the poles using wire ties.

The remaining 3 feet of cloth is left to blow about in the wind.

The idea is that from the air the flags look like predators to the geese and therefore not a safe place to land.

Both the flags and eagle silhouettes were moved every two weeks so the geese would not get use to them being in the same position.



Canada Geese



Chase Away

The final stage was to police the area and chase off any geese from behind the lines.

Everybody got involved.

The maintenance staff, the marshals, and the members ... but the lion's-share was left to Abby, my golden retriever.

Results — Physical Barriers

When the young were hatched and mobile, we discovered we were FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE.

The SNOW FENCES WERE INEFFECTUAL at keeping the geese from getting on shore.

They would either go around the end of the 1,200-foot fence, look for a hole underneath, or in one case a parent would simply sit on the fence and allow the young to climb over.

We used-up many man hours constantly repairing sections of the snow fence or adding stakes trying to improve the barrier.

Once inside the barrier, the geese would of course have a hard time getting out, in effect, corralling them exactly where we did not want them.

Canada Geese



Results — Silhouettes

The FLAGS AND SILHOUETTES DID LITTLE to motivate the geese once the young were born.

The only aspect that worked on a constant basis was Abby the dog chasing the geese off into the water.

Unfortunately, Abby the dog can only be at the course when I am, so the geese became accustomed to my schedule, crowding on to the greens in the evenings.

As the geese grew bigger and began to practice flying, the fences did appear to disperse them about the golf course, but NOT ENOUGH TO BE EFFECTIVE.

More Permanent Solutions

After many man hours of chasing geese off the property and cleaning up droppings — filling up 5-gallon pails three or four times a day — we began to look at MORE PERMANENT SOLUTIONS.

Under federal law, Canadian Geese are protected as migratory birds.

Any alterations to their life cycle, from egg-shaking to a CULL must be approved and permitted by Canada Wildlife Services.

Prior to taking such measures the applicant must have completed a « *goose plan* » — you must prove that you have attempted to get rid of the geese using alternative methods.

Canada Geese



Culling

The process of CULLING usually implies the killing of the birds because of their undesirable characteristics.

Within days of applying, Canada Wildlife Service (CWS) granted Oakfield Golf and Country Club a permit to CULL the existing flocks on the property.

As it turns out, the goose population in Canada has increased ten-fold in the last fifteen years.

In July of 2010, the population was large enough that Canada Wildlife Service (CWS) initiated an early hunt to reduce the numbers before any crop damage could occur, hence the rapid response to our request.

The permit came with a list of regulated methods for dispatching the birds and how to dispose of the carcasses.

A detailed report listing the numbers, dates, and the manner in which the carcasses were disposed, must be submitted within two weeks of the termination of the permit.

Although our permit allowed us to cull one-hundred birds, we felt that slowly reducing the population, at a rate of three or four birds a week, would not only reduce the numbers, but also drive the rest from the property.

In the end, we successfully removed seventeen birds from the property, and reduced the population by roughly twenty per cent.

We intend to apply for the permit next year, and hopefully continue to keep the numbers at a manageable level.

The mention of trade names does not constitute a guarantee or a warranty.

A LOOK AT, and their various incarnations, was the brainchild of William H. Gathercole (now retired) and his colleagues.

Here is a brief summary of Mr. Gathercole's career —

Fields of study — Horticulture/Agriculture, Mathematics, Physics

Alma mater — McGill University • University of Guelph • the first person ever to obtain university degrees and contribute to both the professional lawn care and golf maintenance industries

Expertise in — environmental issues and anti pesticide terrorism • turf and ornamental maintenance and troubleshooting • history of the industry • sales and distribution of seeds, chemicals, fertilizers, and equipment • fertilizer manufacturing and distribution

Notable activities — worked in virtually all aspects of the green space industry, including golf, professional lawn care, distribution, environmental compliance, government negotiations, public affairs, and workplace safety • supervisor, consultant, and, programmer for the successful execution of hundreds of thousands of management operations in the golf and urban landscape, as well as millions of pest control applications • advisor, instructor, and trainer for thousands of turf and ornamental managers and technicians • pesticide certification instructor for thousands of industry workers • founder of the modern professional lawn care industry • prolific writer for industry publications and e-newsletters • first to confirm the invasion of European Chafer insect in both the Montreal region and the Vancouver / Fraser Valley region • with Dr. Peter Dernoeden, confirmed the presence of Take All Patch as a disease of turf in Eastern Canada • with Dr. David Shetlar, confirmed the presence of Kentucky Bluegrass Scale as an insect pest in South Western Ontario, and later, in the Montreal and Vancouver regions

Special contributions — creator of the exception status that has allowed the golf industry to avoid being subjected to anti pesticide prohibition • creator of the signs that are now used for posting after application • co-founder of annual winter convention for Quebec golf course superintendents • the major influence in the decision by Canadian Cancer Society to stop selling for profit pesticide treated daffodils • the only true reliable witness of the events of anti pesticide prohibition in the town of Hudson, Quebec • retired founder of A LOOK AT and FORCE OF NATURE reports

Notable award — the very first man of the year for contributions leading to the successful founding of Quebec professional lawn care industry, which served as a beach-head against anti pesticide activists in the 1980s and 1990s

Legacy — Mr. Gathercole and his colleagues ... designed and implemented strategies that reined anti pesticide activists to provide peace and prosperity for the entire modern green space industry across Canada • orchestrated legal action against anti pesticide activists in the town of Hudson, Quebec • launched the largest founding professional lawn care business in Canada • quadrupled the business revenues of one of the largest suppliers in Canada

Mr. Gathercole is now retired, although his name continues to appear as founder of A LOOK AT and FORCE OF NATURE reports.

