

Please don't feed the ducks

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SALEM, Ore.—Please don't feed the ducks and geese. It's bad for them. Bread, popcorn, French fries and other human food fed to waterfowl can cause starvation, spread disease, cause deformities and result in overconcentration of birds. Left on their own, ducks and geese eat a variety of foods that provide the nutrition they need—plants, seeds and bugs.

"It's important for parents and teachers to understand that feeding bread or other human food to waterfowl is bad for them," said Susan Barnes, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Northwest Region conservation biologist. "We need to teach children to appreciate watching or taking pictures of ducks and geese, so they don't contribute to the problems we see at so many of our lakes and ponds."



The problems include sick birds, unsanitary conditions caused by unnatural overcrowding, over-grazed parks, golf courses and lakesides and delayed migration of waterfowl. Water quality is degraded at many feeding sites, resulting in algae blooms and increased bacteria which can cause human health problems. Ducks and geese can also lose their natural wariness of humans and become aggressive if unnaturally fed.

Permanent deformity of waterfowl is another concern. A condition in geese known as "angel wing syndrome" can be caused by artificial feeding of goslings which, when fed human foods, grow faster than their wing bones can develop. The weight of the growing flight feathers places excess stress on the weak muscles attached to the wing bones, causing the wing to develop in a twisted manner, not conducive to flight. Left untreated, the geese cannot fly, drastically decreasing life expectancy.

Wild ducks and geese can be great fun to watch. If you really enjoy them, please keep them healthy and wild—do not feed them. Find information on [Living with Wildlife](#) on ODFW's website. To learn more about Oregon's native species and their habitats, see the [Oregon Conservation Strategy](#).

--Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife