



Waterfowl Control and Swimmer's Itch

A study by Manny et al. (1994) found that the annual contribution of carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus from migratory waterfowl including Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) can exceed the external loading contributions on some inland lakes. Thus, an overabundance of geese can lead to increased nutrient loads to our lakes. Fortunately, there are some strategies for reducing geese populations which include but are not limited to the following:

1. Encourage riparians to grow waterfront grass to ≥ 3 inches tall as geese prefer short grass.
2. Plant tall native plants near the shore to encourage a soft shoreline that geese may avoid due to the potential of predators hiding in the tall weeds.
3. Avoid mowing to the water's edge.
4. Do not feed geese or waterfowl as this encourages their presence.
5. Egg replacement, goose round-up, and nest destruction methods are effective to a degree but require an MDNR permit and training as well as knowledge of nesting areas. Some of these methods are currently being used by Swimmer's Itch Solutions® as they are also working with reducing merganser populations.
6. Coyote or other intimidating effigies can scare geese away from lawns.
7. The Audubon Society recommends placement of string 6 inches above the ground followed by another row of string an additional 6 inches above the water.
8. Repellent devices such as the Goosebuster® are effective and can be found at: <http://www.bird-x.com>
9. Visit the following website for more methods: <http://www.icwdm.org/handbook/Birds/CanadadGeese/Default.aspx>

In addition to the presence of geese, the abundance of mergansers has previously led to increases in swimmer's itch. Swimmer's itch is caused by a parasite that lives within the gut of waterfowl and snails (such as the *Stagnicola* snail in Higgins Lake). An itchy rash is the result of the parasite entering the skin and can last for a week or more. It is recommended that swimmer's immediately rinse off with freshwater after leaving the lake and also use cortisone creams, baking soda, or colloidal oatmeal if a rash becomes visible. Higgins Lake has had a very successful swimmer's itch parasite reduction program through the removal of resident mergansers. Swimmer's Itch Solutions® and the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO) issues an annual report with management activities and data from current and previous years. This has been confirmed through qPCR analyses which detect the number of parasites in the water.

For more information on this parasite visit: www.cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch/faqs.html