

## **Goose Management**

There are two main species of geese found in York – Greylag and Canada. There are also a small number of Barnacle geese to be found at the University, and very occasionally elsewhere, and a resident population of domestic farm geese to be found, in the main, at Castle Mills.

### Sites

Geese can usually be found at Rowntree Park, in and along the River Ouse between Scarborough Bridge and Rowntree Park (including War Memorial Gardens, Kings Staith, Tower Gardens and Eye of York), River Foss between Yearsley Bridge and Foss Basin, Hull Road Park, Chapman's Pond, Hogg's Pond, Rawcliffe Lake, University of York campus, Wigginton Pond, other remote ponds and lakes in York.

### The Law

The geese, like all wild birds in Britain, are protected under the EC Wild Birds Directive implemented in Great Britain through the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended. This Act makes it an offence to capture, kill or injure birds, or to damage or take their nests or eggs. There are exceptions, the most important of which relate to the open (hunting) season (between September 1st and January 31<sup>st</sup>) and to actions licensed under Section 16 of the Act.

### Previous Council Consideration

- Leisure Services Committee 10<sup>th</sup> October 1996 – reported problems in Rowntree Park – agree that signs should be installed asking the public not to feed the geese.
- Leisure Services Committee 11<sup>th</sup> November 1999 – petition received seeking the removal of the geese from Rowntree Park, report requested on possible measures
- Leisure Services Committee 9<sup>th</sup> December 1999 – specific report on the management of waterfowl, cull and egg treatment approved subject to licences
- Leisure Services Committee 16<sup>th</sup> March 2000 – reported on counter petition

Licences

Following the decision of the Leisure Services Committee in December 1999, licences have been sought annually to treat the eggs of birds at Council owned sites. Since 2005 a specific annual licence is now only required for Greylag geese

Eggs treated per year:

Year	Greylag	Canada	Total
2000		26	26
2001			88
2002	18	47	65
2003			0
2004	15	79	94
2005	49	134	183
2006	54	61	115
2007	37	171	208
2008	30	164	194
2009	29	195	224
2010	23	107	130
2011	41	163	204
2012	21	154	175
2013	22	187	209
2014			

*Notes in support of the table above:*

*2001 - Data not recorded by species*

*2003 - Licence application missed due to change in process*

*2005 - Inclusion of more nesting sites.*

*2010 – Late issue of contract / early hatching ?*

*2014 – No licence for greylags – missed renewal dates*

If a general licence (licence GL05) is obtained from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) a land owner or other authorised person can catch alive or kill, as well as take, damage or destroy the nests, or take or destroy the eggs of certain birds. This licence can only be used to preserve public health or public safety. It cannot be used to cull birds

because they are damaging your property, such as your car or house, or if they're a nuisance.

A cull of problem geese should take place shortly after they have moulted their main wing feathers, as they are unable to fly for 3 to 4 weeks. This usually occurs between the end of May and the end of June.

In December 1999 the Leisure Services Committee agreed to a cull being undertaken. A licence was obtained but the cull was never carried out.

#### Alternative Non Lethal Methods

At various times a number of alternative methods have been looked at e.g. fencing of nest sites, visual and acoustic scares, dead decoys, sheep dogs, chemical repellents, relocation, lion dung, increased sweeping, increased shrub and tree planting. One measure that was introduced (with negligible effect) was to fence the islands within Rowntree Park (in 2001); the geese have on occasions still nested there.

#### Monitoring

City of York Council monitors Geese numbers and the view is that they are currently static with approximately 250 geese in the city centre, with possibly a similar number in more suburban / rural locations. Sample data:

31 <sup>st</sup> May 2007 City Centre locations	109 Greylag adults and 31 young 77 Canada adults and 30 young
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Local members of the Royal Ornithological Society have undertaken a bird-ringing programme in York including geese numbers. Various reports are available. Central Science Laboratory have also studied geese movements in the Greater York area.

A small but regular number of complaints are received at the office each year about geese as well as letters appearing in the York Press. The Green Flag judges often comment on the problems caused by geese in Rowntree Park as one of the few negative aspects of the park.

NBM report

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