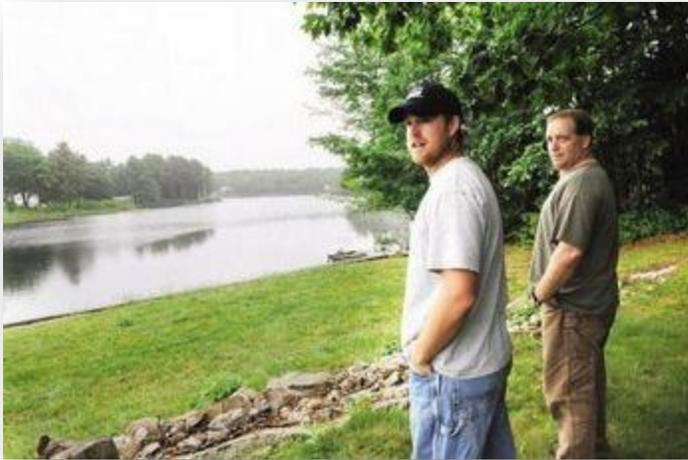


Pond cleared of geese

Wildlife officials to tag birds, move them to northern Maine



Jesse Morris, left, of the USDA Wildlife Service, speaks with Gary Stevens of the York Water District about a plan to capture at least nine geese which have been living at Chases Pond in order to relocate them

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YORK, Maine — Federal and York Water District officials Wednesday took measures to protect the drinking water at Chases Pond reservoir from the threat of fecal contamination caused by migrating geese.

At about 8 a.m., U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Service officials from Augusta arrived at the pond to round up a gaggle of nine Canada geese for relocation, according to Don Neumann, York Water District's director.

Wednesday's action came a year after a Kittery Water District official shot geese on Boulter Pond in York, in an effort to eradicate feces from the local water supply.

York Water District officials noted they called in the USDA to pursue proactive, nonlethal measures to rid Chases Pond of the birds.

About a month ago, 30 "transient" geese flew into Chases Pond, threatening the water quality with the feces they leave behind. The roundup was a way to manage the increasing number of migrating geese, said Gary Stevens, York's water resource protection manager.

The amount of droppings the birds leave behind daily is about the same amount as that of a small dog, according to the wildlife specialists.

At this time of year, the birds can be corralled because they are molting and not able to fly, York officials said. Once birds reach adulthood, they have at least one annual and complete replacement of their feathers, according to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Web site.

Kirk Shively, a USDA wildlife disease biologist, and wildlife specialist Jesse Morris used kayaks Wednesday to circle around the gaggle, which was in the center of the pond at around 9 a.m.

Shively said the geese were looking to one dominant gander to make a decision on where they should go when kayakers on the pond surrounded them for capture. The gander flapped its wings in the water and honked profusely at the men. The wildlife specialists drove eight of the nine geese up on land and into an enclosure placed adjacent to Scituate Road.

"The gander got away but the rest of them decided it was safer to go in," Shively said.

Seven of the birds will be transported to a wildlife management area up north and tagged for tracking purposes, he said. One goose, thought to have been hit by a car, has an injured wing and will be transported to the Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick for rehabilitation, according to Stevens.

"Some geese will come back, but a lot of them will stay where we put them," Shively said of the relocation effort.

Canada geese have dramatically increased over the past 25 years, particularly in urban areas where there are few predators, prohibitions on hunting, and a dependable year-round supply of food and water, according to the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Web site.

Geese feed on vegetation and are particularly fond of mowed lawns next to open water, according to Shively.

The wildlife service provides humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts, according to the agency's Web site.

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