

# DUCKS

Heading to the park to feed the ducks is a very old and popular family pastime; it's a fun, free activity and a great way for parents and children to see and appreciate wildlife and nature.

What many people don't realize is that bread, rolls, chips, and other human "snack food" items do not offer the proper nutrition that ducks and geese need -- and that the act of feeding a diet heavy in breads and other empty carbohydrates can lead to severe health consequences and a variety of other problems. In addition, please remember, you are a visitor in the park wildlife's "home". They should be respected and cared for just as your own family in your own home.



## No Crackers For Quackers

Wild ducks and geese feed on a variety of grains and grasses, aquatic plants, and invertebrates, all naturally found in the wild. When eaten in combination, these foods are nutritionally balanced and provide everything a wild duck or goose needs to survive.

In contrast, foods commonly fed to waterfowl in public parks, such as bread, crackers, popcorn, and corn, are typically low in protein and essential nutrients and minerals (such as calcium and phosphorus). While a single feeding of these "junk foods" may not harm waterfowl, it adds up! If everyone visiting a park "only" gives a few pieces of bread or crackers to ducks and geese, it quickly becomes the bulk of what wild waterfowl consume, and results in a variety of nutritional disorders.



## What Can Happen If I Continue To Feed The Water Fowl?

Allowing ducks and geese to find their own wild, nutritionally balanced diet is best – for the health of waterfowl and the surrounding environment.

Waterfowl can rapidly become conditioned to, and dependent on, handouts. Fed ducks and geese behave differently. They become more aggressive and eventually lose their wariness of humans. Some will not survive because they can't compete. Visible symptoms of poor nutrition and advanced stages of starvation are often seen at artificial feeding sites. For example, waterfowl may have drooping wings or may lose their ability to fly.



## Should I Stop Feeding The Ducks?

None of this means it's necessarily wrong to feed waterfowl. The main lesson we want to convey is moderation, which means limiting the size of handouts as well as avoiding ponds where lots of other people already toss food.

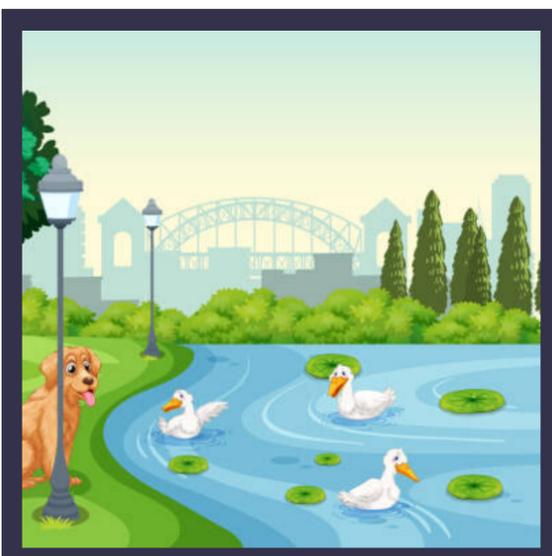
If you still feel compelled to feed your local ducks, try these instead of bread:

- Corn (canned, frozen or fresh)
- Duck pellets (sold online and at pet stores)
- Lettuce, other greens (torn into small pieces)
- Frozen peas (defrosted)
- Oats (rolled or instant)
- Seeds (including birdseed or other varieties)



## Instead Of Feeding Ducks And Geese

- Organize a trash pick-up at your local park. Collect stray fishing hooks, lines, and sinkers.
- Learn more about native ducks and geese and their natural history.
- Spread the word! Share this information with others.
- If your local park has a problem with visitors feeding, contact Animal Services. We're happy to share this information with those overfeeding the water fowl.



## Park Reminders

Animal Services would like to remind park patrons of a few things while enjoying the amenities the lake has to offer:

- **ALL personal pets must remain on a leash at all times. Citations may be issued to violators.**
- Pet owners are EXPECTED to pickup after their pets by removing any waste. Watauga Parks Department has conveniently provided Doggy Waste Stations for this purpose.
- RESPECT THE WILDLIFE - we have received multiple reports of ducks being chased, rocks thrown at them and they are being stomped on. Ultimately killing them. This behavior will not be tolerated. For more information about Ordinance Sec. 6-291. - Humane treatment required; abandonment; cruelty, click [here](#).
- Capp Smith is open to Licensed individuals wishing to fish in the lake. We ask that you pickup after yourself and DO NOT use the lake as a means to dispose of fishing line, hooks, etc. These items can be deadly to ducks, turtles, rabbits and fish.

**For Animal Control assistance within the City of Watauga, dial 817.656.9614.**