

Human-Wildlife Conflict Prevention

Humans have profoundly impacted wildlife and the environment. While we need to develop a better understanding of the broader factors contributing to human-wildlife conflicts in Ontario, including climatic factors, land use, agricultural practices and wildlife management initiatives, we are focusing on human-wildlife conflicts that result from direct interaction.

Human-wildlife conflicts are best described as interactions among humans and wildlife when the actions negatively impact one, the other or both. Conflicts vary depending on where they take place, time of year and type of wild species.

The increase in both urban and rural development to accommodate Ontario's population of nearly 13 million people has resulted in a greater number of interactions with wildlife.

Animal Alliance is committed to innovative, effective, humane and non-lethal solutions to human-wildlife conflicts. We are currently working on a number of human-wildlife conflict issues, listed below.

[Canada Geese](#)

[Cormorants](#)

[Coyotes](#)

[Deer](#)

[Hunting / Trapping / Poisoning](#)

Canada Geese:

Animal Alliance has worked with many organizations and government officials to develop a humane, non-lethal approach to human-geese conflicts.

Most urban conflicts occur from June to mid July when the birds are flightless and at their maximum numbers. They congregate in large numbers in municipal parks, around storm water management ponds and along urban shorelines and come in conflict with residents who are using the facilities for recreational purposes. Residents complain of goose faeces and grass damage.

Animal Alliance has developed a *Habitat Modification & Canada Geese* manual. The purpose of this manual is to provide parks and wildlife personnel, government officials, as well as advocates of wildlife preservation and restoration ecology with information relating to the habitat needs and deterrents of Canada Geese in urban environments. Habitat modification as a means of reducing human-geese conflicts works on a site specific basis. It offers a choice between

eliminating the use of the site by geese altogether or accommodating the geese in such a way as to reduce or eliminate conflict.

Habitat modification through natural landscaping techniques offers both an ecological and humane means of reducing human-geese conflicts in urban, suburban and even agricultural environments.

Most rural conflicts occur in the spring, when the early wheat begins to grow, and the late summer and early fall, when crops mature and are ready for harvesting. Farmers complain of crop damage. Most recent figures estimate the economic impact on Ontario agriculture of all wildlife at approximately \$41,000,000 (Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/docs/Wildlife_Update_Report_051109.pdf). Therefore the average damage per farm in Ontario (close to 60,000 farms) is \$683.00. Wheat damage, the main crop attractive to geese, other migratory birds and wildlife was estimated at total of \$979,171.

The Canadian Wildlife Service's brochure titled *Canada Geese and Farms* suggest habitat modification as a mitigation measure. The brochure suggests that the farmer "focus efforts on the area between cultivated land and ponds or other wetlands. Create natural barriers of trees, brush and shrubs around ponds, wetlands and streams. If you have a pond, avoid creating islands or peninsulas which are ideal nesting sites for geese." (<http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/docs/geesefarms-e.pdf>)

Organizations, such as [GeesePeace](#), have formed to provide conflict resolution measures where geese and people are in conflict. GeesePeace is dedicated to building better communities through innovative, effective, and humane solutions to wildlife conflicts.

The [Habitat Modification & Canada Geese](#) manual is available to all interested parties (for manual appendices, [click here](#)). We feel this is of particular interest to municipalities dealing with human-geese conflicts in their area. The manual features numerous case studies in locations in USA and Canada that have implemented habitat modification practices.

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Double-crested Cormorants:

[Double-crested Cormorants](#) are native colonial waterbirds. In the late 1800s and early 1900s cormorant numbers were dramatically reduced because of persecution by fishers and others who killed the birds. As a result of protection, cormorant populations began to recover, reaching approximately 900 nesting pairs in the early 1950s, but impact from toxic chemicals such as DDT again reduced their numbers to 125 nesting pairs in 1973.

From the 1970s to present day, cormorant numbers are returning to those of pre-persecution days, a success story for sure.

But now wildlife management agencies across North America are calling the cormorant population “overabundant” and “unnatural”. One document classified cormorants as “grotesquely hyperabundant”.

Animal Alliance has joined with a coalition of organizations to stop the continent-wide lethal management of cormorants, forming [Cormorant Defenders International](#) (CDI). Please refer to the CDI web site for all available reference material.

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Coyotes:

From the time Europeans settled North America, coyotes have been persecuted because of conflicts, including preying on livestock. Coyotes have thrived despite organized attempts made to eradicate them in the first half of the 20th century. Governments offered bounties and funded extensive coyote “control” programs. Farmers even poisoned dead livestock and left them for the coyotes to eat.

Animal Alliance has worked to reduce human-coyote conflicts through education and non-lethal intervention programmes, specifically in communities that are experiencing conflict, such as Sarnia, Toronto and [Ottawa](#).

[Stanley Gehrt](#) is an assistant professor of environmental and natural resources at [Ohio State University](#) and he is in the sixth year of a multi-year study of coyote behavior in urban Chicago. Gehrt found that “urban coyote populations are much larger than expected; that they live longer than their rural cousins in these environments; and that they are more active at nighttime than coyotes living in rural areas.” (<http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/urbcoyot.htm>.) As a coyote expert, he has written about human-coyote conflicts and how they can be resolved. A document titled [Urban Coyote Ecology and Management](#) provides an excellent overview of coyotes and conflict resolution possibilities.

In spite of our recommendations, in November 2009, Saskatchewan introduced a coyote bounty, paying residents \$20 if they produced four paws of a killed coyote. In February 2010, the government announced 18,000 coyotes were killed, about one half of their target number.

For CBC’s February article, visit <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/saskatchewan/story/2010/02/19/sk-coyote-program-1002.html>.

2011 articles:

February 18, 2011 – Ottawa Citizen – [“Controversial coyote hunting contests continue”](#)

February 22, 2011 – myKawartha.com – [“Business owner launches coyote contest”](#)

March 2, 2011 – Ottawa Citizen – [“Minister mum on hunting contests”](#)

March 4, 2011 – Ottawa Citizen – [“Ontario mulls coyote hunt”](#)

In spite of biologists and conservationists providing evidence to the contrary, Agriculture Minister Bob Bjornrud believes the bounty was necessary. For a May 2010 article, [click here](#).

Organizations, such as the Born Free USA united with the Animal Protection Institute, have researched this issue extensively. For an overview, visit <http://www.bornfreeusa.org/articles.php?p=1139&more=1>

We need to keep pressure on the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Honourable Brad Wall. Please mail and call the Premier, politely asking him to make progressive advancements in his province. Hand-written letters are best but you can also email him.

[The Honourable Brad Wall](#)

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Deer:

Deer are under attack by wildlife managers throughout North America. Persistent human encroachment into deer habitat have resulted in conflicts between deer and people. Governments claim that deer populations are “overabundant”, their numbers higher than at any time in the past. They make statements about deer without any data or science to support their claims. As a result of the “hyperabundance” categorization, governments argue that deer are causing more vehicular collisions, agricultural and forest damage and present health risks through ticks carrying Lyme disease.

Consequently, wildlife managers advocate that more deer be killed during hunting season and that hunting seasons be extended. They advocate culling of deer in parks and protected areas because they claim that the deer are damaging forest habitats. And they advocate hunting in urban settings where deer habituate urban river valleys and green spaces.

Animal Alliance has actively opposed all lethal management of deer through municipal councils and provincial governments. The case of the Sifton Bog deer in London, Ontario provides a good

example of a human-wildlife conflict situation. The municipal council, conservation authority and wildlife managers are advocating lethal cull of all but eight of the 50 deer who reside in the bog. The animal protection community and many area residents oppose the cull.

Below are three PDF files with important information about deer:

- [Wounding rates deer and bow hunting 1998](#)
- [Indirect Effects of a Keystone Herbivore Elevate Local Animal Diversity](#)
- [Dispersal of Trillium seeds by Deer: Implications for Long-Distance Migration of Forest Herbs](#)

A number of documents prepared by Animal Alliance were provided to **London City Council** – for more information, [click here](#).

We also worked to convince the **City of Hamilton** (ON) to employ non-lethal methods to resolve the City's human / deer conflicts at Iroquoia Heights Conservation Area. The Conservation Authority formed a Deer Management Advisory Committee in March 2010, of which Animal Alliance was a part. A number of documents are available – for more information, [click here](#).

We are currently working in BC to encourage municipal councils to develop progressive, non-lethal human / deer conflict resolutions.

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Hunting / Trapping / Poisoning :

The Alberta and Saskatchewan governments use toxic poisons, Strychnine and Compound 1080 to kill wildlife when they come in conflict with humans. They are the last two provinces in Canada using these draconian substances. With your help, we will fight to stop these governments from using these poisons.

The Saskatchewan government must provide a notice of intent to renew their application to use Compound 1080 by September 24, 2010. They have not done so to date, which gives us an opportunity to oppose the renewal. The deadline for Alberta's renewal of Strychnine is December 2012.

In addition, the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency reviews restricted products like Strychnine and Compound 1080. The agency fails to consider the cruel nature of the poison, the matter of secondary poisoning and the broader and long term impacts of the poison on the environment. We intend to engage the Agency regarding the obvious inadequacies of the review and approval process. For more information, [click here](#).

In 2006, the [University of Waterloo](#) made headlines for killing and drowning beaver found on campus. AAC was contacted by concerned students, who subsequently held a memorial for eight beavers caught and killed by the University for felling trees. AAC presented a report to the

University, recommending that non-lethal methods be used to mitigate wildlife issues on campus. The University agreed.

In 2005, a little dog was caught in a conibear trap and died in his owner's arms. The dog was playing in a dog park in Guelph. Karen Levenson, our Guelph colleague, was in the park at the time with her dog, and so began AAC's efforts to make Guelph a safer and more compassionate city. After several meetings with AAC, the City of Guelph became the [first city in Canada to ban traps](#) in the city limits, making parks safer for dogs and humans alike.

Some past incidents:

January 5, 2011 – Ottawa Citizen – [No warnings needed for animal traps, ministry says](#)

December 17, 2010 – Ottawa – [Dog chokes to death after getting stuck in kill trap](#)

December 15, 2010 – Back Bay Island – [Pet's death sparks outrage](#)

December 15, 2010 – Lafontaine – [Dog recovering from brush with death](#)

February 11, 2010 – Kelowna – [Trapper apologizes for dog's death](#)

Animal Alliance continues to work with municipalities across Canada in an effort to end hunting and trapping as a solution to human-wildlife conflict issues. If there is a conflict in your area, please contact us today.