

The Cowichan Valley

falls within the **Pacific Flyway** and provides important foraging and breeding habitat for waterfowl during migration.

We have two local designated **Important Bird Areas (IBA)**: Somenos Lake and the Cowichan Estuary, which have international significance for their high value as waterfowl habitat.



A Ducks Unlimited assessment of estuarine habitats in British Columbia ranked the Cowichan and Chemainus estuaries in the top class.



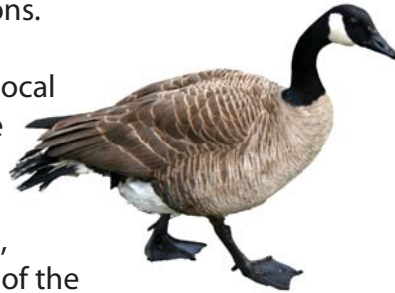
Many other highly valued and unprotected waterfowl habitat areas occur in this region.



The Cowichan Valley has ongoing regional issues with migratory waterfowl and needs to develop a stewardship action plan to help resolve the issues.

Local naturalists, farmers and regional waterfowl experts have identified concerns over loss of habitat, impacts on agricultural land and health risks from resident Canada goose populations.

It is critical that local stakeholders are included in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the stewardship action plan. In order to be successful, those groups with a vested interest must be active in addressing, and ultimately solving, the problems.



The following pages list three of the main waterfowl concerns, their prescribed actions and identified stakeholders for the Cowichan Valley.



For more information or for a complete copy of the Cowichan Valley Regional Waterfowl Stewardship Action Plan, please contact the Cowichan Land Trust office at (250) 746-0227 or visit our website at www.cowichanlandtrust.ca



For information on the Environmental Farm Plan visit:
http://www.ardcorp.ca/index.php?page_id=14

We would like to thank the following organizations for their support:

Ducks Unlimited Canada
<http://www.ducks.ca/>

Comox Valley Naturalist Society
<http://www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/>

Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society
<http://www.somenosmarsh.com/>

Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society
<http://www.naturecowichan.net/CVNS/>

Madrone Environmental Services Ltd.
<http://www.madrone.ca/>

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Environmental Damages Fund

Cowichan Valley Regional Waterfowl Stewardship Action Plan



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Loss of Habitat Wetlands and Agricultural Land

Concerns

- Loss of existing wetlands and changing agricultural practices reduces waterfowl habitat.
- Loss of habitat will concentrate existing populations of waterfowl in remaining habitat.



Prescribed Actions

- Secure or preserve the condition of existing wetlands through acquisition, conservation covenants, and land owner agreements or stewardship pledges.
- Provide financial incentives and technical support to maintain traditional agricultural practices. Financial support could include cost sharing for cover crops and relay crops, or implementing farm practices in Environmental Farm Plans.
- Develop effective local bylaws to protect wetlands.

Identified Stakeholders

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Local planners and engineers
Local residents and naturalists
Local farmers



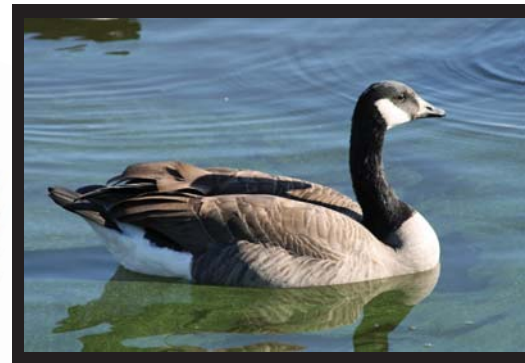
Resident (Non-migratory) Canada Geese

Concerns

- Local year-round overpopulation.
- Fecal waste creates water pollution and recreational field contamination, posing a public health concern.
- Intensive consumption of Carex marshes by resident geese, which leads to the destruction of valuable fish and wildlife habitat.
- Consumption of spring seeded corn, spring seeded forage crops, grains and other crops on agricultural lands.

Prescribed Actions

- Form an advisory committee comprised of local stakeholders.
- Obtain long-term support from regional and provincial governments.
- Document the extent of water pollution, to gain understanding of potential health risks.
- Reduce the population of resident Canada geese. A cull would reduce the population; however, governments and public would both need to support this option.

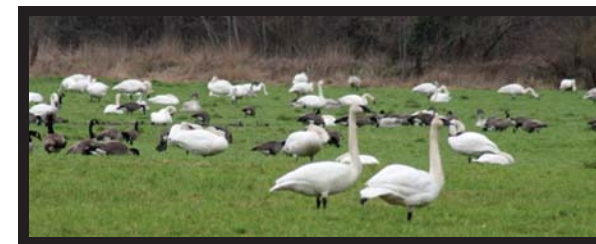


- Recommend changes to the hunting season, which is a provincial and federal government responsibility. The traditional hunting season beginning in mid October tends to target the migrating geese rather than the resident population as it can be hard for hunters to distinguish between resident and migratory geese. Earlier hunting periods in September are provided to target resident geese; but do not reduce the resident Canada goose population.
- Encourage more consistent egg addling in key areas to limit population growth as an ongoing management action.



Identified Stakeholders

Canadian Wildlife Service
CVRD, Municipality of North Cowichan
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Ministry of Environment
Local residents
Regional farmers
Local Fish & Game / Rod & Gun clubs



Migratory Waterfowl and Agricultural Land

Concerns

- Paddling of soil by swans to forage on potatoes causes soil compaction and flooding.
- Large numbers of birds on a farm causes overgrazing impacting food production for livestock.

Prescribed Actions

- Form an advisory committee comprised of local stakeholders.
- Obtain support from Cowichan Agricultural Society
- Acquire support from regional government.
- Encourage more widespread adoption and implementation of the Environmental Farm Plan.
- Prevent the impacts of migratory waterfowl by using lure crops, cover crops and improving soil drainage. There are examples of partnership and ways to deliver these programs in Comox and Delta.
- Compensation where prevention and mitigation have not been successful. Both Comox and Delta have initiated projects that assess the impacts and compensate farmers for a portion of the impacts from migratory waterfowl.

Identified Stakeholders

Canadian Wildlife Service
Regional farmers
CVRD and Municipality of North Cowichan

