

Is Feeding Bread to Ducks Bad?

What do you do with your leftover and expired food? Would you dump it in a pile in your front yard to feed the wildlife? Most people do not want a pile of food in their yard however; many people seem to think it is ok to drop off their unwanted food in parks. They justify it by saying they are feeding the ducks. In reality, they are doing the ducks more harm than good even if this result in unintentional.

Feeding the wildlife in community parks and other urban and suburban environments is a tradition that has remained prevalent for generations of people who frequent these areas. For many, it's a way to connect with nature, bond with family, or just spend some leisure time. It can seem so hard to resist ducks begging for attention, and it would seem that providing food for them would make them healthy and happy, but it doesn't.

There are certain areas in Shiawassee County where people are feeding the waterfowl so consistently that these animals are being trained to rely on humans to supply them with the food they need to survive. In other words, these ducks and geese are shifting to unnatural feeding patterns. In a natural setting, they will seek out a variety of nutritious foods such as aquatic plants, natural grains, and invertebrates. The waterfowl at these artificial feeding sites are often fed food items such as bread, popcorn, french fries and other people food, and it is unhealthy for wild birds.

Bread is very low in protein, contains additives that wildfowl aren't built to cope with, and it's a very poor substitute for natural foods. Ducklings fed bread miss out on vital nutrients during their critical first few weeks, causing splay leg, angel wing, slipped tendons and other growing defects.

There is also an issue with having so many waterfowl concentrated in such a small area. Natural food is usually available over a wide area. At some artificial feeding sites, competition for each bread crumb is high and they can become unnaturally aggressive towards each other. Some ducks, usually the youngest, are unable to compete for handouts and suffer because they never learn to forage naturally. In addition, when ducks have regular access to handouts they lose their natural fear of humans and become increasingly bold and aggressive. Furthermore the loss of fear of humans can result in other unforeseen hazards, such as bird crossing a busy road.

With the high concentration of ducks and geese in a small area, there will be a high concentration of waterfowl feces. This contributes significantly to water pollution in the form of fecal coliform bacteria. Also, the nutrients from the feces can also cause murky green algae blooms and aquatic weed growth, which crowds out other plants and animals and results in a degraded habitat.

Folks have always enjoyed feeding the ducks and geese, but what they might not realize is that feeding these animals is detrimental to the birds and the environment in many significant ways. There are many ways to connect with nature that are far less invasive. You could visit natural areas such as DeVries Nature Conservancy and check out the plants, watch some birds, or enjoy some other aspect of the ecosystem. If you resist feeding waterfowl, then you may have the privilege of watching their natural feeding behavior, which can be very entertaining.



Recently, a pile of sub sandwich buns has been dropped off at Loop Park behind the movie theatre in Owosso. The discarded food is not only an eyesore and bad for the environment, but it is extremely unhealthy for the ducks to eat.



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