STALKING THE WILD CANADIAN GOOSE

Like many courses in the area, Bryn Mawr is blessed with a population of Canadian geese. To those of you not entirely familiar with this water fowl, I will give a brief account of their assets and liabilities.

The Canadian goose is a very majestic bird in flight, upon landing on water and swimming about. If they would stay in the air or in the water their presence could be thoroughly enjoyed on the golf course. Naturally this is not the case. This gooes doesn't just wander up on the grass, it enjoys munching on it. Munching may be a misnomer. Devouring golf ball size chunks of sod is closer to reality. Geese are also very aggressive during mating season. I have received several reports of attacks on golfers. I personally had one goose start to fly at me (about head high) from a distance of 25 yards as I approached its nesting area. Their most annoying habit is leaving large quantities of fecal matter strewn all over the course. I believe this bird must produce fecal matter equal to at least twice its own body weight daily. All in all on the golf course, this bird's liabilities outweigh its assets.

Having reached this conclusion, what can be done to eliminate or at least decrease their population to a tolerable number? (perhaps one or two)

The Canadian goose is a protected species, therefore it cannot be hunted except during a very short season with a special permit. A representative of the National Fish and Wildlife Service informed me although they could not be shot, they could be harassed. He gave me several boxes of "shell crackers". These are basically blank shotgun shells that explode about 200 feet downrange. After several days of firing at them every morning, the geese left for a few weeks. Upon their return, I tried scaring them away again. This time I succeeded only in moving them back and forth between the two ponds on our course. After a week of this the geese would only take off, fly around in a circle and land in the same spot. The shell crackers do work quite well for shotgun starts.

Our next attempt was to use swans to discourage proliferation of the geese. At first we were going to try live swans. This notion was reconsidered shortly after an article appeared in the Tribune telling the tale of a fisherman who died as a result of an encounter with a swan.

Styrofoam swans were the next choice. This was determined after a number of articles appeared claiming success with this method in Connecticut. Our first batch of "swans" were from a Mateus wine display. After removing the Mateus logo, our swans were put in place. One member told me, "Those swans are so graceful you'd almost think they were artificial." For some reason or other the geese disappeared for a period of a couple months. (I believe they got a good laugh then felt sorry for me) There being safety in numbers, when the geese returned they were double in population.

This past winter I learned, that just any old arrangement of swans won't do. One must have a "family system" of swans. After purchasing three "systems" for a total of $400.00, I was set to try again. My "families" in place, I began to stalk the existing geese and was prepared to fire my trusty shell crackers at the precise moment. I slowly approached the geese, starting from about 200 yards away. This was an accordance with the instruction manual I received with my swans. As I got nearer the geese became more and more agitated, "Gee", I thought, "just like my manual says." As I got closer to the moment of truth my pulse quickened in expectation. I raised my gun, at the precise moment and I fired. When the smoke cleared, the geese had moved approximately one foot. Repeated firings met with the same results. The geese actually moved closer to the swans. (probably for protection). My hopes dashed, I have gone back to the drawing board.

I am open to suggestions if anyone has any. I was told to try putting a wetting agent in the lake. The surfactant would break the surface tension on the feathers and cause the geese to sink. "Hmm, I wonder if the swan families would sink also?"

Mike Nass, Bryn Mawr C.C.
Credit - Verdure 6/83

PINCH YOUR PETUNIAS

Get ready to pinch your petunias as soon as the hot weather appears. Petunias are thermophotoperiodic, so their growth habit varies according to temperature and daylength. At temperatures of 62 degrees F and below, the plants will always be well-branched, bushy, compact and multi-flowered. From 63 degrees to 75 degrees F, day length affects the plants' growth habit. If they receive less than 12 hours of daylight at these temperatures they will be single stemmed and have only one flower. Long days at these temperatures will produce more ideal-looking plants. At temperatures over 75 degrees F, day length no longer has an effect, and the plants will always be tall and leggy and bear very few flowers.

Pinch petunias at planting time in the early spring to encourage branching and flowering. By the second week in July they need a second pinching. Cut off each stem about three or four inches above ground level, weed, fertilize and clean up dead and dying leaves. You will have flowers again in about two weeks. Pinch again in mid August and near the end of September (early in September if frost dates in your area come early) to maintain the display.

American Horticulturist, May 1983

A PREPLANNED PROGRAM OF ATTACK EFFECTIVELY CONTROLS TURF PESTS

Although each golfing season can include unwelcome turfgrass pests, it also means another opportunity to improve pest control efforts.

"Superintendents know white grubs and surface feeders — cutworms, sod webworms and armyworms — will hit sometime during the golfing season," states Dr. Price Parham, TUCO Plant Health Specialist, Reserch and Development. "But what they can't predict is how extensive infestations will be."

Insect pressures vary each year, so Parham recommends taking regular evaluations of your turf to pinpoint insect problems. "The most important thing to remember when controlling insects, is not to treat blindly," says Parmah. "Adopt a monitoring program to diagnose which insect is causing the damage. By using economic threshold guidelines prior to insecticide application, an economical, environmentally sound approach to insect control is possible."

To be successful, base the insect control program upon turf pests' life cycles, signs of turfgrass damage and when damage is most likely to occur.

Surface Feeders —
The surface feeding trio — armyworms, cutworms and sod webworms — have similar characteristics:

— 40 to 50-day life cycles
—a possible two to three generations produced each year
—larva appear two weeks after peak adult flight activity
—night feeders

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