



Canada goose

(*Branta canadensis*)

Managing Canada geese in the Centre and Île-de-France regions

National agency for hunting and wildlife (ONCFS), Centre and Île-de-France regional office

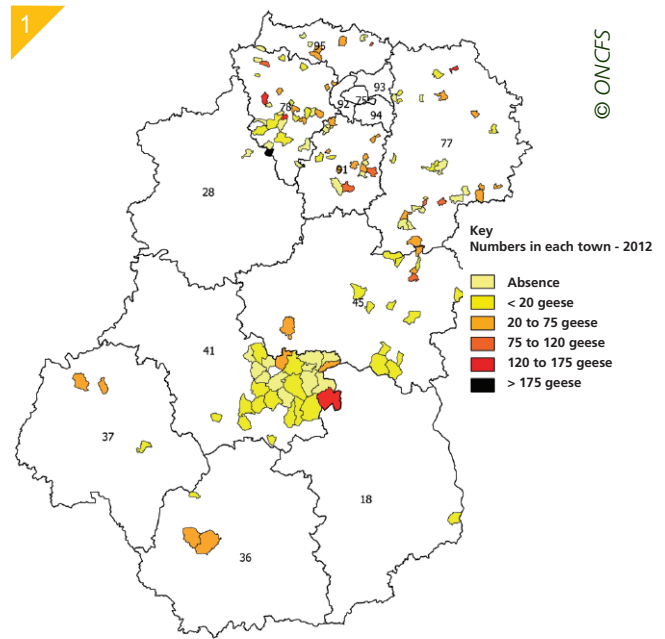
- ONCFS is a public agency placed under the supervision of the Ecology and Agriculture ministries.
- Its missions correspond to the guidelines contained in the Grenelle environmental agreement, including general surveillance of rural areas and policing activities for the environment and hunting, and research on wildlife and its habitats.
- The Centre and Île-de-France regional office comprises a workforce of 119 based in six departmental offices in the Centre region, two in the Île-de-France region and in the regional office itself.
- Contact: Centre and Île-de-France regional office - dr.centre-iledefrance@oncfs.gouv.fr

Intervention site

- In the Centre and Île-de-France regions, Canada geese were first observed in the natural environment in 1976 and 1985. They had escaped from recreational parks or from private owners.
- The species colonised natural and artificial wetlands in the two regions, notably the park and national nature reserve in the town of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, as well as the recreational park in Cergy-Pontoise where efforts to limit the species were undertaken due to the pollution of the bathing water caused in part by the population of Canada geese.
- The Centre region is home to over 5% of all wetlands in continental France, primarily in the Brenne area (1 300 ponds) and in the Sologne area (3 000 ponds). Colonisation of these areas by Canada geese can cause problems in terms of degraded environments and competition with the native species.

Disturbances and issues involved

- **Impacts on native species**
 - There is a risk of hybridisation with the barnacle goose, a protected species, and the greylag goose (ten cases were observed in 2012 in the Centre and Île-de-France regions).



1. Winter counting of Canada geese in the Centre and Île-de-France regions.

Impacts on the environment

- The animals can damage the environment (banks and reed beds) through excessive trampling.
- They can also cause eutrophication of water due to the high input of nutrients (droppings).

Impacts on human activities and health risks

- The birds can pollute bathing waters, overgraze meadows and leave their droppings in public areas.
- These disturbances required the rapid intervention of ONCFS at the request of prefectural authorities, in the form of efforts to limit the numbers and to count the populations during the winter.

Interventions

Monitoring populations by counting in the winter

- Annual counting operations have been carried out on wintering sites since 2006. The work is done during the period prior to dispersal of the birds in search of their breeding sites.

- The populations of Canada geese were counted in ten departments of the two regions, starting with the towns where ONCFS personnel were aware of their presence and then expanding the search to new towns where the species had been observed.

- In 2013, Canada geese were noted in 140 towns and a total of 3 397 birds were counted. The Île-de-France region was home to 70% of the total.

- The annual monitoring revealed a strong increase in the numbers starting in 2010 in the Île-de-France region and apparent stability in population numbers in the Centre region.

■ Management work

- In addition to the counting, operations to limit the populations were launched by ONCFS starting in 2007. Since 2011, in response to a ministerial circular, the control work by the ONCFS has targeted primarily protected natural areas.

A number of management methods may be used. They complement each other and must be adapted to the specific situation.

- Sterilisation of eggs:

- spray the eggs with glycerol or with formaldehyde;
- shake the eggs to destroy the internal membrane;
- pierce the eggs with a spike.

- The first two techniques avoid rotting of the eggs and consequently any renewed attempt to lay eggs. To be effective, sites must be systematically searched and at least 80% of the eggs must be destroyed over a period of several years.

- Shooting using a shotgun or a rifle:

- during operations organised year round by ONCFS with prefectoral authorisation, adult and subadult geese are eliminated using firearms (shotguns and .222 Remington rifles);
- this method is highly effective and results in a long-term reduction in populations, however qualified personnel are required and attention must be paid to the safety measures and to the impact of the shooting on other species.

- Netting:

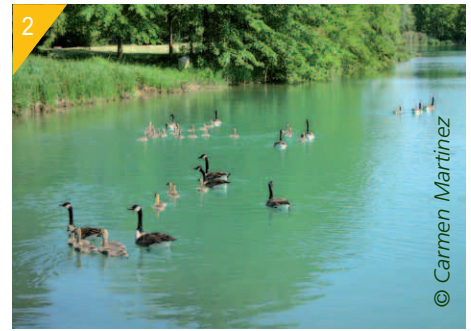
- the birds are captured during their post-nuptial moulting (when they cannot fly) on the feeding sites, using nets (5 x 5 cm mesh);
- great skill is required and only a part of the population can be targeted, however a large number of birds can be captured in a limited amount of time.

Results and assessment

■ Results

- This initial control operation made clear that to have any real impact on the Canada goose population, it is necessary to have a comprehensive, strategic approach capable of limiting the dispersal of the population and eliminating the breeding centres.

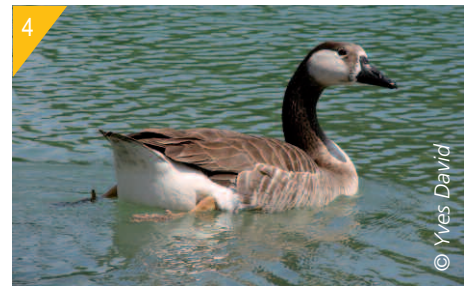
- Shooting was highly effective on sites where there were few possibilities to disperse. On other sites, e.g. a string of wetlands, a combination of the three techniques is indispensable to limit the spread of the species. To obtain any significant results, the management work must be pursued over the long term.



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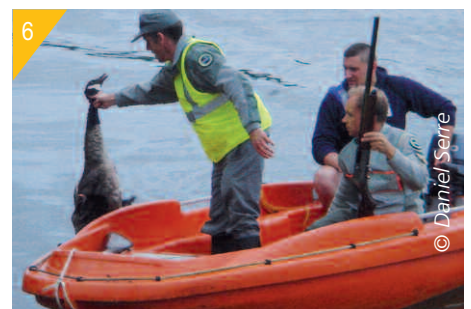
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2. Canada geese.
 3. Geese grouped in a field.
 4. A hybrid of a Canada goose and a swan goose.
 5. Sterilisation of Canada goose eggs by spiking them.
 6. 7. Shooting operations.



■ Assessment

- The table below is an example of the results from 2011.

Results of control work and human resources required (man-days) in 2011.

2011	Adults	Juveniles	Eggs	Total	Man-days
Loiret	189	22	317	528	10
Cher	25			25	0 (special authorisations)
Indre-et-Loire	No operations in 2011				0
Loir-et-Cher	121	36	112	269	25
Indre	No operations in 2011				0
Eure-et-Loir	50	0	0	50	6
Yvelines	47	3	262	312	25
Essonne	97	6	119	222	38
Val d'Oise	0	0	132	132	2
Seine-et-Marne	179	0	82	261	18
TOTAL	683	67	1 024	1 799	124

Information on the project

- Two articles on the work to control Canada geese in the Centre and Île-de-France regions were published in the *Faune sauvage* journal that devoted a report to the species in the beginning of 2011. A report and a map presenting the situation for the species are published each year by the ONCFS regional office.
- The issues surrounding the Canada goose were also presented to the general public during various events (agricultural fair, etc.).

Outlook

- This work requires a large number of man-days in the field, which represents a considerable cost for ONCFS.
- Classification of the Canada goose as a huntable pest should result in a reduction in numbers at less cost, however other control measures must also be taken, notably in areas where hunting is not possible (parks, recreational areas, protected natural areas).
- It is also necessary to take into account the risk of the birds dispersing during the operations, particularly in wetlands such as Sologne, Brenne and the Loing valley.

Rote on applicable regulations

- The species may not be introduced into the natural environment (ministerial decree dated 30 July 2010).
- The species may be hunted until February 2015 (ministerial decree dated 23 December 2011).
- The species is considered a pest throughout continental France.

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8. Raising awareness concerning the Canada goose during a public event.

For more information

- Centre and Île-de-France regional office: www.oncfs.gouv.fr
- The initial version of this document was first published in: Sarat E. (coord.) 2012. Vertébrés exotiques envahissants du bassin de la Loire (hors poissons) connaissances et expériences de gestion. Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, Plan Loire Grandeur Nature, 128 pp.
- Fouque C., Schricke V., David Y., Serre D. 2011. La Bernache du Canada : une espèce exotique devenue envahissante. Diagnostic, plan de lutte et régulation. Faune Sauvage, 290 : 18-31.
- ONCFS, délégation interrégionale Centre-Ile de France. 2012. La Bernache du Canada en régions Centre et Ile-de-France : expérience de suivi et de gestion des populations 2011-2012. Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage. 15 pp.