

**The Graduate School of Social Work – The Institute for Human-Animal Connection  
and  
The Sturm College of Law - Animal Law Program  
at  
The University of Denver  
present**

## **The Human-Animal Coexistence Catalyst Series**

**Geese & People: Protection and Policy**



**Dr. JoAnn T. Hackos**

*Audubon Colorado Council*

- Our Best Hope – Restoring the Plants
  - Proliferating turfgrasses leads to increasing numbers of non-migratory giant Canada Geese
  - To quote Professor Douglas Tallamy: “Lawn dominates landscapes in all but our driest ecoregions. Turfgrass has replaced diverse native plant communities across the country in more than 40 million acres, an area the size of New England, and we are adding 500 square miles of lawn to the United States each year.”
  - The long-term solution is to convert lawns in our parks and neighborhoods to native plants, such as wildflowers, shrubs, and taller grasses, or artificial turf in playing fields.
  - With native plants and alterations to the view, we can affect the “carrying capacity” of our Front Range parks, office complexes, and neighborhoods. Carrying capacity is the number of individuals of a species that can be supported indefinitely without degrading the local resources.

**Julia Senecal, MSW**

*Humane Education Programs Manager*

*Institute for Human-Animal Connection*

*The University of Denver*

- The cumulative psychological impact of repeated killing of wildlife is critical to consider, as exposing humans - especially our youth - to such violence is dangerous for our society. In fact, research indicates that adults repeatedly exposed to the violent killing of an animal are susceptible to “hardening or habituation” to this violence and practice.
- The health and well-being of the natural environment, humans, and other species is interconnected. When we engage in inhumane methods as a means of addressing human-wildlife conflict, we threaten this sacred connection, thereby harming our own physical, emotional, and psychological development and well-being.
- Supporting humans - children especially - in building meaningful relationships and connections with nonhuman animals and the environment is critical to protecting the health and well-being of all life forms. Incorporating "humane education" broadly - in schools, in our parks, in our homes - can support children and adults in forming a connection that inspires engagement in critical thinking and problem solving around these issues.

**Debbie Main, M.A.**

*Managing Director*

*Docs on the Blocks*

- In Colorado and in Denver, we have the responsibility of merging our Western state heritage with the welfare of animals.
- Time and again, people of good will have worked together to overcome difficult animal challenges in our state and city.
- The case studies presented reveal decades of experience working together to figure out solutions to problems in ways that are mutually-beneficial to government, animals, and our communities.
- Today it is the geese; tomorrow it will be another species and a new set of actors. Therefore, we need to forge a way of working together that endures.

**Dr. Carole Woodall, Ph.D.**

*Canada Geese Protection Colorado*

- "Considering Transparency"
  - Timeline of Events
    - March 17<sup>th</sup> 2016 | Mayor Hancock announces that Denver would host the Greater & Greener 2019 International Parks Conference
    - 2017 | A Washington Park neighborhood group began to meet with Councilman Paul Kashmann asking for a more vigorous method to manage the geese population
    - 2017 | Front Range Colorado Voters and Property Owners initiate a Change.org petition to "Require Denver to Create, Implement Canada Goose Remediation and Management Plan"
    - October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018 | Mayor Hancock signed the contract with USDA-Wildlife Services to capture geese for slaughter, with Scott Gilmore designated as project administrator.
    - June 2019 | DPR Goose Management Program published
    - June 4<sup>th</sup> 2019 | Run-Off Election for Mayor completed; Mayor Hancock Re-Elected.
    - June 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 | Depredation permit goes into effect
    - July 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 | Removal of Canada Geese from Garfield Lake Park
    - July 20-24<sup>th</sup> 2019 | Greater & Greener 2019, showcasing Washington Park, City Park, and Sloan's Lake
- Denver Parks and Recreation is expecting to have a renewed Depredation permit go into effect beginning in March 2020.
- The concerned residents living around Washington Park, Sloan's Lake, Garfield Lake Park, and City Park were not given the opportunity to engage in a public discussion.
- The communities and neighborhood associations living around Berkeley, Rocky Mountain, Barnum Park, Overland Pond, and Harvey Park, should be given a meaningful opportunity to discuss and understand the non-lethal options that were studied, attempted, and rejected.
- The general public should not find out when news breaks.

## Courtney DeWinter

### *Canada Geese Protection Colorado*

- Canada Geese Protection Colorado has completed 8 months of intense research & investigation since the geese in Denver Parks were killed in 2019, with the following findings:
  - **Denver Parks has not followed basic principles of wildlife management:**
    - Denver Parks is guessing about how many resident geese live in Denver Parks. They have not conducted a population count, which is the first step in developing thoughtful wildlife management programs.
    - Denver Parks has not consistently deployed egg oiling at a meaningful volume, which would help humanely keep the resident goose population down. Denver Parks has gone for years without doing any egg oiling. In recent years, Denver Parks only oiled 20% of the eggs.
  - **Denver already has the equipment to clean Denver's parks of goose feces.**
    - For taxpayers who have requested that the city clean the parks of goose poop (and been refused), we have proof that Denver Parks already owns turf cleaning equipment. City officials are simply refusing to use that turf cleaning equipment to clean Denver's parks.
  - **Killing geese in Denver Parks will waste a half million dollars of Denver taxpayer dollars.**
    - Killing geese in Denver Parks is a failed strategy in multiple ways:
      - Killing geese fails to keep geese out of Denver parks because more fly in to replace the geese that were killed.
      - Denver's goose killing program, when deployed over a 3-year period, will waste roughly a HALF MILLION DOLLARS of Denver taxpayer dollars.
- Canada Geese Protection Colorado calls on the city of Denver to cancel its contract with USDA-Wildlife Services, and to spend our tax dollars on goose egg oiling at a meaningful volume, long-term vegetation management & cleaning the parks.

## **Dr. Marc Bekoff, Ph.D.**

*Professor Emeritus of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology*

*The University of Colorado at Boulder*

- Geese are sentient, feeling beings, who experience a wide range of emotions including grief. Killing them --slaughtering sentience--breaks up families and friendships.
- Killing geese isn't a one time assault; it'll have to be done annually, something about which most people are unaware. And even if it were a so-called 'one shot affair,' it's time to take killing off the menu of options for solving animal-human conflicts for which we are responsible, which accounts for the vast majority if not all of these interactions.
- Killing nonhuman animals (animals) in the name of coexistence doesn't work and is biologically and ethically indefensible.
- Killing geese for our convenience sends the wrong message to youngsters and others, namely, that other animals are here for us and their lives really don't matter to them.
- Compassionate conservation stresses two main points:

- Do no harm
  - The life of each and every *individual* matters because they have intrinsic value because they are alive. They're not valued for what they can do for us.
- It's not an animal rights position that drives the above points, but rather, it's a matter of decency. The decent thing to do is to respect all individuals and not kill them as if their lives don't matter.

# Advocating at the Government Level for the Non-Lethal Management of Denver's Canada Geese

## Method 1

- Meet with your Denver City Councilmember and Mayor Hancock
  - If you are a Denver resident, schedule a meeting with your City Council Member or attend your Member's open office hours.
  - Each Denverite has one representative based on zip code and two at-large representatives on the Denver City Council.
  - Find your City Councilmember and at-large representatives:  
<https://www.denvergov.org/maps/map/councildistricts>
  - IMPORTANT: Be concise. Go alone or in a small group. If you chose to go in a group, ensure that each participant is prepared and assigned one topic to discuss. Keep your presentation to 15 minutes or less.
  - Prepare a one-page handout with all your key talking points. Print two copies: one for the City Councilmember and one for his or her staff.
  - Include your name and contact information on the handout.

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- Attend a Denver City Council Meeting
  - The full Council meets most Mondays in regular session at 5:30 p.m. at the City Council Chambers in room 450 of the City and County Building, 1437 Bannock Street, Denver, CO 80202.
  - A 15-minute public comment period is held in committee meetings during which proposed changes to the municipal code or policy will be discussed.
  - **IMPORTANT:** each speaker gets a maximum of two (2) minutes to speak.
  - Speakers should sign-up to speak in the Council Conference Room of the City and County Building, Room 391.
  - Sign-up begins 30 minutes prior to the Committee’s scheduled start time and ends 15 minutes before the meeting begins.
  - **NOTE:** You cannot sign-up to speak as a proxy for someone else. The person wishing to speak must be the one to sign-up.
- There are also monthly general public comment sessions.
  - These meetings occur during the first and third City Council meetings each month, starting at 5:00pm and lasting 30 minutes.
  - Each speaker gets a maximum of 3 minutes to speak.
    - Starting at 12pm on the Friday before the next scheduled general public comment session, use one of the following three (3) ways to reserve time to speak:
      - <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-city-council/public-input/general-public-comment-session.html>
      - 720-337-2000
      - Arrive in-person with a member of the Legislative Service Staff from the City and County Building, Room 451.
      - **NOTE:** You cannot sign-up to speak as a proxy for someone else. The person wishing to speak must be the one to sign-up.
- Other Strategies
  - Attend public or private meetings and events to learn more about Canada Geese.
  - Meet with Denver Parks and Recreation to discuss non-lethal measures.
    - 201 W Colfax Ave, Department 601  
Denver, CO 80202  
Phone: (720) 913-1311
  - Comment on new proposals in a timely fashion.
    - Proposed actions can be found on one of two Fish and Wildlife websites:

- [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)
    - [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)
  - Proposed actions will include agency contacts.
  - There is generally a 30-day comment period after the proposal is issued.
  - Make your comments substantive and specific.
- Host a rally
  - Is a permit needed? Find out at:
    - <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-parks-and-recreation/rentals-permits/event-permits.html>
- Write op-ed pieces for State and local news outlets.
  - Op-eds are a tool to help advocates express opinions and provide useful information on a topic.
  - Op-eds are typically published by newspapers and magazines.
- Conduct tabling events and knock on doors to educate your neighbors about Canada Geese in Denver.

## Method 2

- **Run a Denver Ballot Initiative in 2021**
  - Follow These Steps in Order
    - Pick 5 people who will write your proposed ordinance. These 5 are known as the ‘Petitioners Committee’.
    - Your ordinances must start with these words: “Shall the voters of the City and County of Denver Adopt...”
    - Once you have drafted your ordinance, you must deliver it to two people:
      - Executive Director of Denver City Council  
1437 Bannock Street, Room 451  
Denver, CO 80202
      - Denver City Attorney  
C/O Kirsten Crawford  
Denver City Attorney’s Office  
1437 Bannock Street, Room 353  
Denver, CO 80202
    - NOTE: Denver’s City Attorneys may suggest changes to your ordinance language. A public meeting will be held in which you can weigh-in on the proposed changes.
    - Print the Following Form and Start Collecting Petition Signatures:
      - [https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/778/documents/CampaignInfo/PetitionBlanks\\_InitiatedOrdinance.pdf](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/778/documents/CampaignInfo/PetitionBlanks_InitiatedOrdinance.pdf)
    - You will have 180 days to collect 8,265 (as of 2019) valid signatures from people registered to vote in Denver.
    - Suggested places to gather signatures include outside grocery stores, post offices, or shopping centers.
    - NOTE: Aim for about 12,000 signatures in case some turn out being invalid (e.g. signatures of people who are not registered to vote in Denver).

- NOTE: It is illegal to bribe or pay people to sign the petition.
  - When you are done collecting signatures, get your petitions notarized at a local bank or courthouse, and submit the completed petition to the Denver Clerk and Recorder, who will determine if you have collected enough valid signatures.
    - Denver Clerk and Recorder  
201 W Colfax Ave  
Denver, CO 80202  
Phone: (720) 913-1311
  - Once your collected signatures have been validated, your Ballot Initiative will appear on the 2021 ballot.
  - NOTE: Advocates who want spend more than \$1,000 in support of the initiative must fill out the following campaign finance form:
    - [https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/778/documents/Form\\_ReportIndependentElectioneering\\_2017-10-10.pdf](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/778/documents/Form_ReportIndependentElectioneering_2017-10-10.pdf)
  - For any questions about this process, contact Denver's Elections Division Communications Office:
    - Phone: 720-865-4872
    - E-mail: [electionscomm@denvergov.org](mailto:electionscomm@denvergov.org)
- Helpful Links:
    - [https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/778/documents/Petition%20for%20Initiated%20Ordinance%20Quick%20Guide\\_2019\\_Update.pdf](https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/778/documents/Petition%20for%20Initiated%20Ordinance%20Quick%20Guide_2019_Update.pdf)