



Ryan Carpe
Staff Writer

GREENVILLE □ The legions of Canada Geese in Greenville City Park have their days numbered, as the city recently contracted with a business that deters the pesky birds from the premises.

Stalk And Awe Geese Management Services (SAGMS) is a locally owned and operated Canada Geese Management Service, and will be on-site over the next two months to help alleviate the birds' numbers. The company is native to the Greater Dayton area and has over five years of experience managing nuisance geese.

Stalk and Awe specializes in humane geese deterrent methods with a strong emphasis on the use of skilled Border Collies.

□It will bring the predator-prey relationship ever so slightly, □ said Greg Warner of SAGMS. □The geese will feel that they're in danger, and in the course of a couple weeks will choose to leave the area on their own. □

Because of the highly trained practices of the canines, the process does not hurt the geese, including an already injured goose, molting geese or goslings.

□The dogs are trained not to harm the geese in any way, □ said Warner. □And using dogs is a little more effective than other deterrent methods. □

And the dogs are trained to only seek out geese, so park birds will be left alone.

The initiative to get rid of the geese came from consistent complaints from Greenville residents who were concerned over their recent swelling population. At often the geese became aggressive and their leavings littered the park. Rough estimates number the geese at more than 100 in 2013 at the city park.

And while goose population and aggression is often the chief issue, geese feces can also carry harmful parasites like *Campylobacter* and *Cryptosporidium* which can be transmitted to adults, children and pets. An average goose produces roughly two pounds of droppings per day, and 100 geese provides a hefty load of 200 pounds of feces.

SAGMS's operation is funded entirely through private donations with the cooperation of the Greenville Park Board, and government funds were not utilized to reduce the goose population.

SAGMS begins its goose harassment in August and will run through September at four days a week. The time of the visits will vary, as the geese are intelligent enough to understand a pattern and adapt accordingly. But the process is not immediate, and will require several visits and vigilant patrols.

City officials said that over the first week there will not be a drastic reduction in geese, but over time the numbers will steadily decline.

□It□s not a quick solution. It□s not going to be that these dogs come in and then they□re gone,□ said Greenville Mayor Mike Bowers. □I just want to make sure folks know we□re addressing the issue, but its going to be a solution that does take a little bit of time.□

SAGMS utilizes a Geese Management System based on several crucial periods throughout the year, including geese pairing, nesting, raising their goslings and molting.

In early February geese begin to mate and in April and May they will begin to nest. This is a key time in terms of geese control, as they return annually to mate and nest based on where they themselves hatched. This period requires the most goose harassment, however since the city employed Stalk and Awe later in the year, they will take over after the molting stage.

Traditionally, it is imperative that the geese are not prevented from nesting on the property. Once the nests are established, the geese can become aggressive and can be very difficult to manage. But geese will not nest in any area they do not feel safe.

SAGMS can also apply humane pressure to geese while they are in the water to make sure that they will vacate the premises for calmer grounds.

According to SAGMS, developers and landowners often unknowingly create the perfect conditions for geese by constructing their ideal habitats. Geese are grazers and feed on fresh, short green grass, and with a permanent body of water like a water retention pond or subdivision lake next to their feeding area, they□ve created a perfect environment.

Because the Canada Goose was nearly nearly hunted to extinction, the Federal Migratory Bird Act of 1918 was formed, making it illegal to harm a goose or nest without a federal permit, and penalties for violating the act range can reach up to \$10,000.

The Greenville Park Board will evaluate the SAGMS□s practice in the spring to assess the viability of the program, and it could possibly pursue additional avenues to rid the area of nuisance geese.

SAGMS kindly requests that residents keep their dogs leashed while enjoying the park to prevent interference with their work.

During the geese harassment process, which takes about an hour, SAGMS prefers their dogs and staff not to be interrupted. But they are happy to answer questions and introduce the public to the Border Collies after the work is completed.