



Canada Goose

Management Program 2025

City of Markham Summary Report



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The Wildlife Management Group Inc

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Canada Goose Management 2025

Introduction

The City of Markham has maintained an ongoing Canada Goose Management Program for many years, focusing on areas of concern within the city's boundaries, and the 2025 program continues an approach initiated in 2024. The 2025 program continues to focus on two locations within these boundaries, being Swan Lake Pond and Toogood Pond.

The program allowed for an integrated approach to addressing strategic objectives and incorporated many science-based and Environment Canada-approved techniques.

In addition to on-site mitigation, off-site land-use assessments were conducted in 2024 -2025 during the seasonal biological stages of geese, which aided in determining resident goose populations in and around the program control zones.

The program objectives are simple

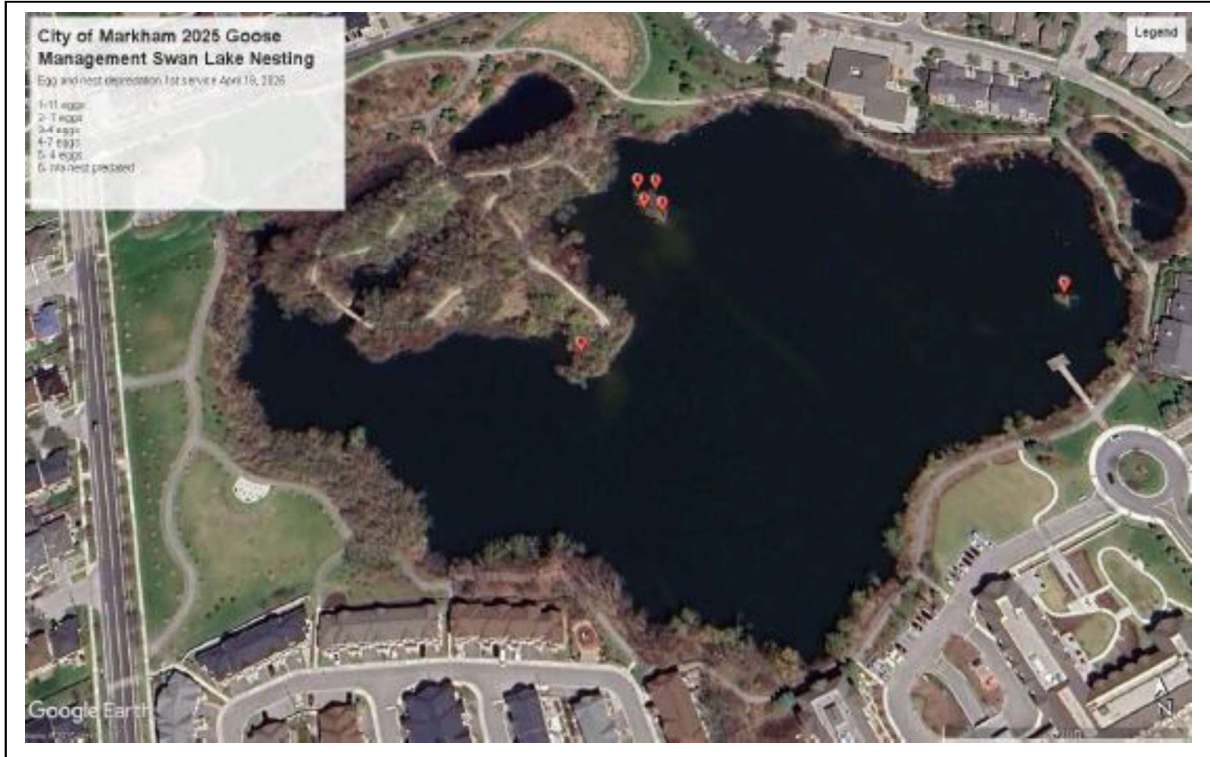
- *Immediately reduce the number of geese seasonally at designated site locations using approved techniques*
- *Monitor trends and obtain data for reporting to the City*
- *Maintain a healthy balance between geese and people*

By following Environment Canada 'Best Practices' guidelines, implementing humane science- based control techniques for evaluating goose pressure on adjacent city-owned land areas, all the objectives of the program have been accomplished.



Nesting Report for 2025

Swan Lake & Toogood Pond



Swan Lake and Toogood Pond Nesting Data 2025

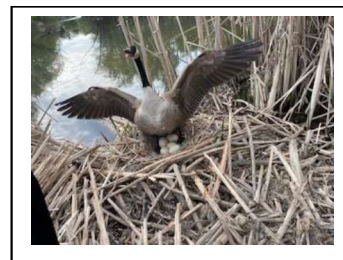
Nest #	Lat	Long	Egg count #1 19/04/2025	Egg count #2 13/05/2024
1	43.53'.49N	79.15.2.87W	11	0
2	43.53'.51.48N	79.15'10.59W	7	0
3	43.53'.51.40N	79.15'10.81W	4	0
4	43.53'.51.68N	79.15'11.03W	5	0
5	43.53'51.86N	79.15'10.82W	6	0
6	43.53'49.04N	79.15'12.38W	predated	0
Toogood Pond	43.52'20.17N	79.18'59.62W	0	5
Totals			33	5



May 13, 2025

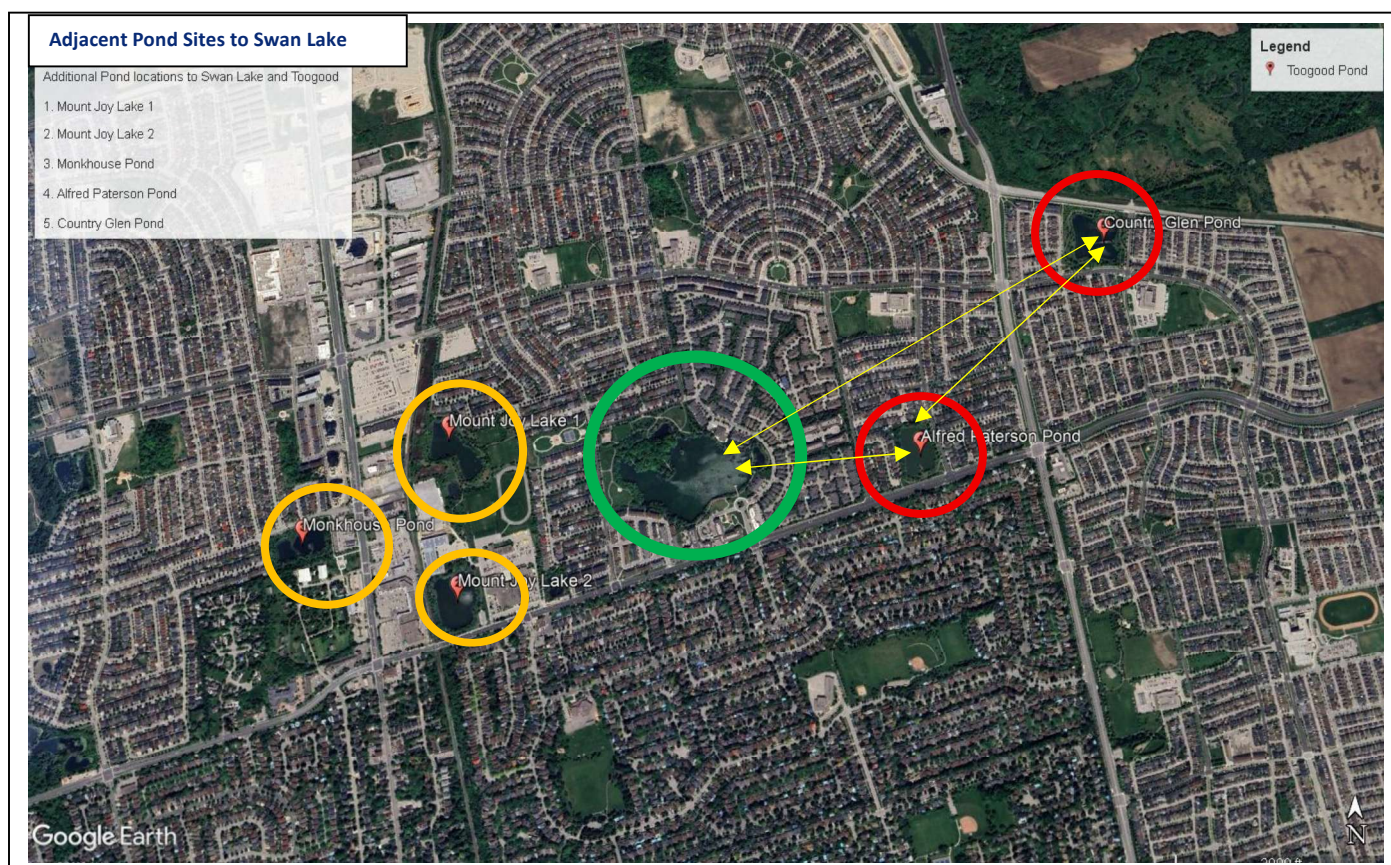
No second or third nesting occurred on Swan Lake due to predation and continued mitigation on goose populations.

1 Nest was treated in **Toogood Pond** on May 13, 2025 containing 5 eggs.



Adult Goose Mitigation

During the control year, the primary focus of control was laser light, avian distress calls, and limited strategic zinc-crackling pyro. It was recorded that during many service occasions during daylight hours, zero geese were found on the water at Swan Lake, but that number escalated during dusk and dawn fly-in times. Service times were adjusted to accommodate the increase in evening occurrences.



During fall-time patrols, geese were observed leaving Swan Lake and taking refuge in nearby ponds, where they would remain overnight or for only a few hours. This localized bird pressure strongly influenced the timing of geese returning to Swan Lake. Ponds to the west of Swan Lake were not monitored; however, knowing that geese fly westerly would indicate easy refuge in these localized pond sites, especially where short manicured turf exists.



Laser Light:

This method of control/harassment humanely and effectively moves 2 or 200 geese from the targeted areas. It does not interfere with other birds or wildlife in the same area, as it targets geese.

Application times are focused on dusk to dawn, with daytime follow-up to ensure the effectiveness of control.

Often, follow-up services are conducted within 1-2 hours of the initial application to ensure that 'return times' for geese align with the program's objectives.



This was again a preferred method of control in 2025, and the geese could be effectively moved from Swan Lake and Toogood Pond during twilight hours.

Stationary lasers were again placed on site, but due to product improvements, the previous lights were removed and not replaced in time for fall applications. Improved design and remote solar charging have improved and will be a focus tool in Swan Lake during 2026. The monitoring and recording of results from this application will continue from early spring through late fall.

Mobile Distress Call

Used in conjunction with laser light, the application of a mobile (in-vehicle) distress signal effectively draws the attention of geese with a digitized alarm call. Once applied to cars with LED lights, this is now recognized by geese as on-site predation.

Used primarily in daytime applications, the geese quickly associate the vehicle with distress and limit the return of resident geese to the area.

Zinc Crackler Pyro

During daytime service applications, laser light and other distress-call techniques may be somewhat limited in their effectiveness against persistent geese on site. At Swan Lake Pond, the use of mild pyro 'cracklers' is applied to alarm the geese and very effectively move them from the site. This method of control is applied with great care and diligence to avoid disturbing the pond's natural environment and to ensure safety



during assessment and application. The integration of all tools and techniques has led to a highly effective program again in 2025.

Key Performance Indicators of the program are obviously the number of resident and transient birds in targeted control zones, the number of non-targeted species still present on site as part of its natural environment, and, foremost, water quality, which is monitored for bacteria counts.

The following tables present trends in goose numbers on Swan Lake Pond and Toogood Pond for 2025, with 2024 and 2023 comparables where applicable.

The tables show the total average number of geese per week, starting March 16 (week 1) and ending December 31 (December 15, 2023).

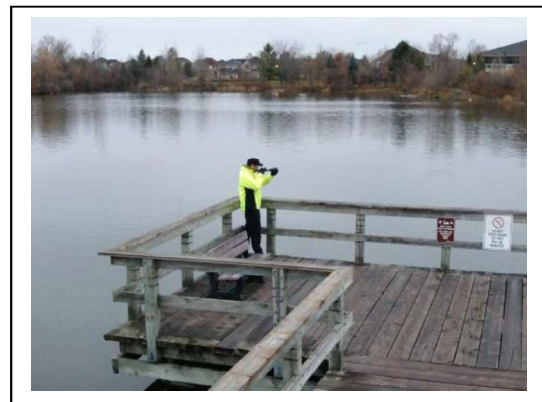
Although the 2025 program was initiated in the first week of January, frozen water prevented the attraction of geese to sites until March.

The tabulated numbers show;

- trends in resident and transient geese during four seasons
- long-term effects of mitigation used during each service, and cumulative services

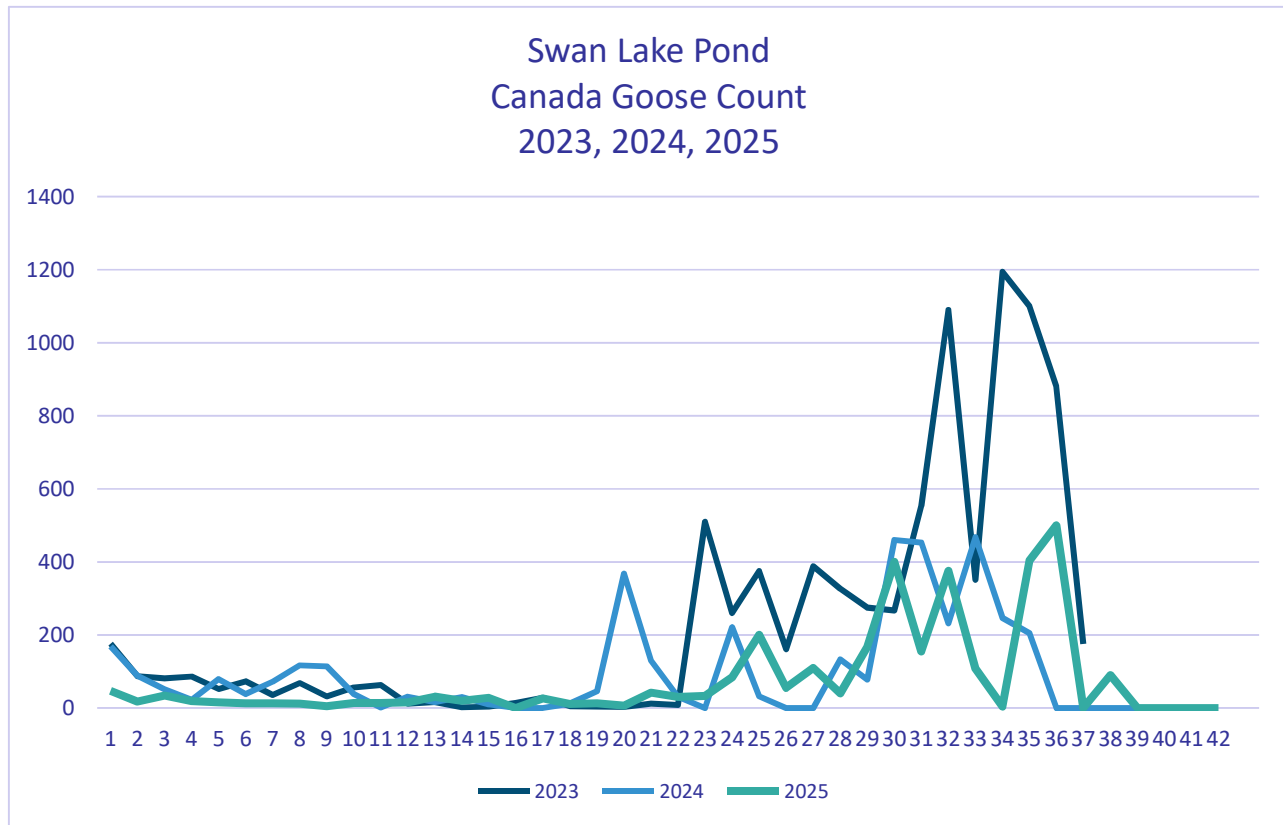
Long-term effects will be most evident in 2025 and beyond, as goose pressure decreases due to the continued presence of service in both daytime and nighttime applications. This was a key factor in deterring geese during the fall months of October and November, as a stationary laser was used on a small island.

Enhancements to the program will continue to reduce goose pressure on sites and maintain the program's objectives.





Swan Lake Pond Trend Analysis



Average weekly numbers are shown as the total number of geese counted for the week divided by the number of services completed.

Notable significant dates

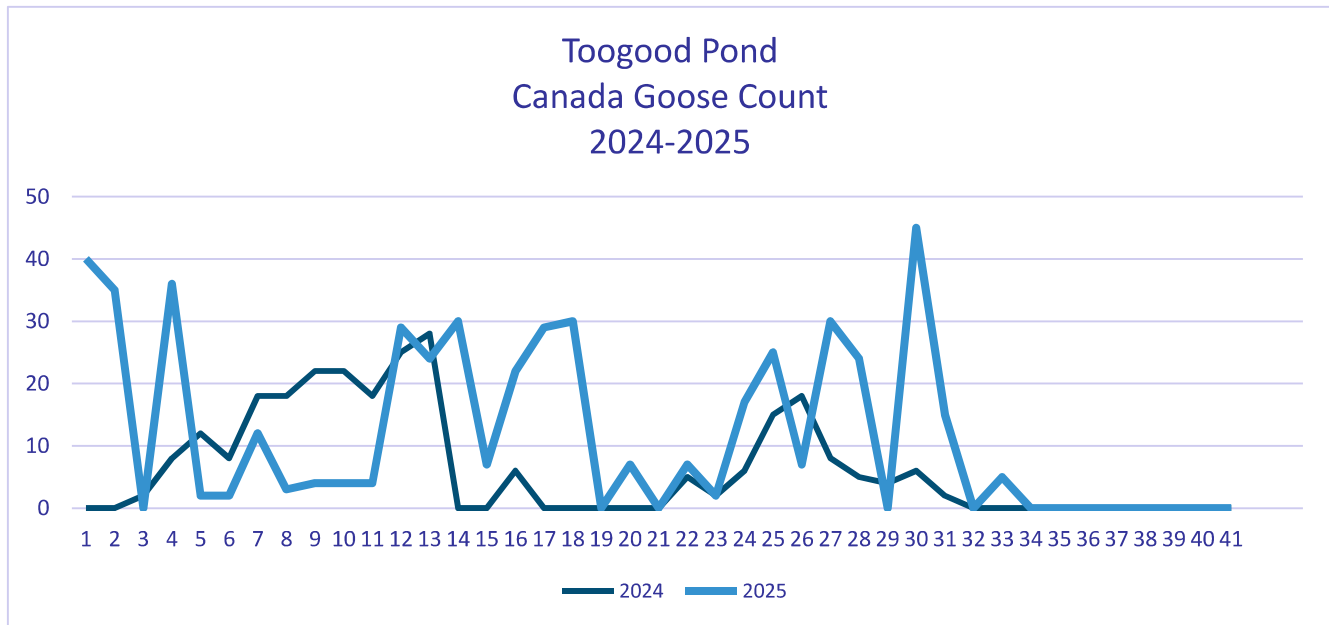
- Data range: week 1 is March 16, week 41 is December 28-Jan 2.
- Below-average counts until week 25.
- Data Recording initiated first week of January with weekly site inspections with zero counts until March 19 (Week 1) when the first notable numbers were recorded, they were still significantly lower than in previous years. Zero number of geese from Jan 1- March 19, and again from November 28- January 1 largely due to ice formation on water.

Highest count at one time in week

- Week 3 – 100 geese April 1
- Week 24 – 400 geese August 29
- Week 28 – 500 geese September 26
- Week 34 – 800 geese November 3



Toogood Pond Trend Analysis



Average weekly numbers are shown as the total number of geese counted for the week divided by the number of services completed

Notable significant dates

- Data range: week 1 is March 16, week 41 is December 28-Jan 2.
- 2 large groups of 40 and 35 geese recorded in weeks 1 and 2, then another large group of 95 geese on a one-day event in week 4 (April 9), then averaged below 2024 numbers until week 12
- Data Recording initiated first week of January with weekly site inspections with zero counts until March 16 (Week 1)
- Zero number of geese from Jan 1- March 16 and again last week of November through December.
- slight increase in numbers in December in adjacent ponds but not represented on this data

5 geese average per service in 2025

Highest count at one time in week

- Week 4 – 95 geese April 9
- Week 25 – 50 geese September 3
- Week 28 – 60 geese September 26



TREND ANALYSIS

Two essential factors in the two pond areas contribute to fluctuations in goose populations on these sites.

- Weather within the flyway
- Seasonal Off-Site Land Use Influence

Weather plays a vital role in determining whether geese are present in areas where water is their primary attractant. This is a well-known variable in goose management programs, as evidenced by the City of Markham's goose management program. It is most evident in spring and early winter, when ponds freeze over, yet turf remains available. When adjacent pond sites are open and targeted ponds are frozen over, geese remain highly visible in the immediate area.

This was evident in December, when Toogood Pond was frozen over, and the majority of Swan Lake Pond also had significant ice. The adjacent Country Glen Pond had large open water areas, and geese were still being sighted flying over Swan Lake and occasionally landing on turf areas beside the pond.

As in 2024, during the post-molt period, 2025 showed noticeable numbers of geese flying into Swan Lake Pond, more often in the evening and just before twilight. Very often, zero or very few geese are sighted during daytime inspections, with increased twilight activity a few hours later.

Seasonal off-site land uses are another vital factor in goose pressure in these urban ponds.

From agriculture and specific crop cycles nearby to land development that removes these seasonal food sources, the geese adapt and change their patterns, relying on the safe environments of large nearby water sources. Springtime soybean planting will increase goose activity between May and June (molt), while corn harvesting in the fall will draw substantially more geese to the borderlands of urban environments to the north and east of Markham sites.

Understanding crop rotation and property developments within 10-20 km of city borders will enable anticipation of trends in seasonal goose activity.





Adjacent Pond Monitoring

We have monitored goose activity after they moved from Swan Lake Pond and Toogood Pond. Their trajectory leads them directly to other nearby ponds and/or open turf or agricultural fields within their immediate flyway. While these adjacent sites can serve as alternative destinations for the geese, we have found that in 2025 the geese use them only as a refuge to return to the larger, more habitable Swan Lake Pond and Toogood.

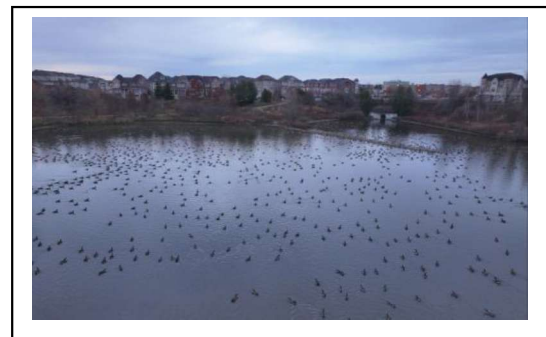
Alfred Paterson Pond

This particular pond is very near Swan Lake Pond. At times, there are so many geese in this pond that they overflow onto private residential properties. This is an ideal refuge for geese when they are being moved from Swan Lake Pond, and it also shows that the effects of mitigation at Swan Lake Pond are successful in deterring geese from wanting to fly back to it.



Country Glen Pond

This pond is a little farther from Swan Lake than Alfred Paterson Pond, but as the crow flies, it lies perfectly between agricultural lands and a buffet of short, manicured turf. It is an ideal refuge for geese being harassed out of Swan Lake, and it harbors them through the winter, as only a portion of its water ever freezes.



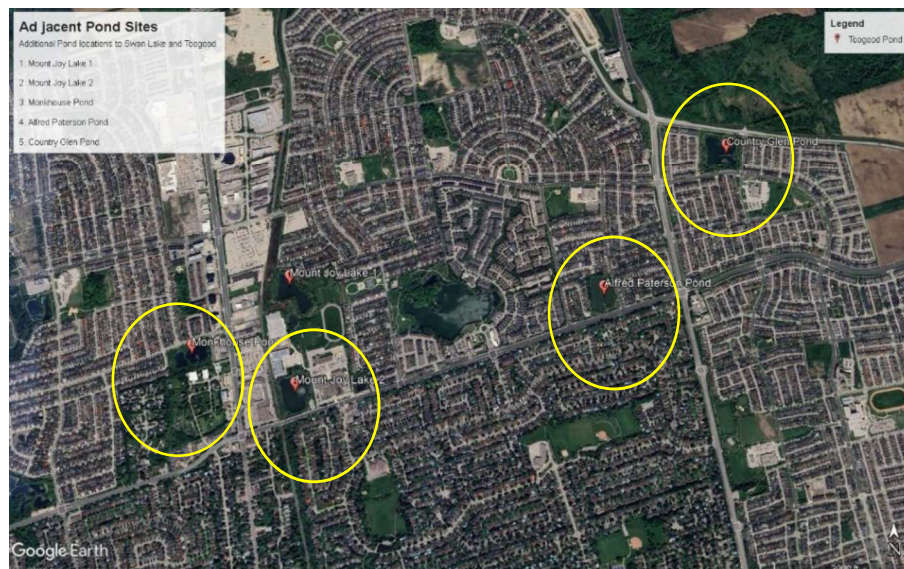


Mount Joy Lake 1 and 2

Both of these large bodies of water are ideal for goose nesting and provide refuge from Swan Lake and Toogood Ponds. When geese travel westerly from Swan Lake and north from Toogood, these ponds contribute to local goose pressure, which supports the local goose population and affects targeted pond sites.

Monkhouse Pond

Some geese have been observed in this pond, which serves as a retreat for geese. However, not much time has been spent monitoring consistent activity in this pond to date. This site also serves as another nesting and refuge site for geese, which would help geese access Swan Lake and Toogood Ponds due to its proximity to them, especially during post-molt and fall migration times.



Integrated Service Techniques

Integrated controls improve as technology becomes available to support effective goose management initiatives.

Continued use of improved deterrent systems will aid in moving geese from targeted sites both day and night, but sometimes more aggressive forms of control may be required if environmental conditions keep the geese close. As any program can say... *we can't keep the geese from coming... but we can keep them from wanting to stay.*



Moving forward in 2026, improved patrol techniques will include;

- Improved stationary laser light applications in humane and safe applications at both Swan Lake and Toogood Ponds
- **Increased** twilight service schedules to match daytime patrol schedules
- **Increased** monitoring of habitat modification applications and consulting on new application techniques.

Recommendations

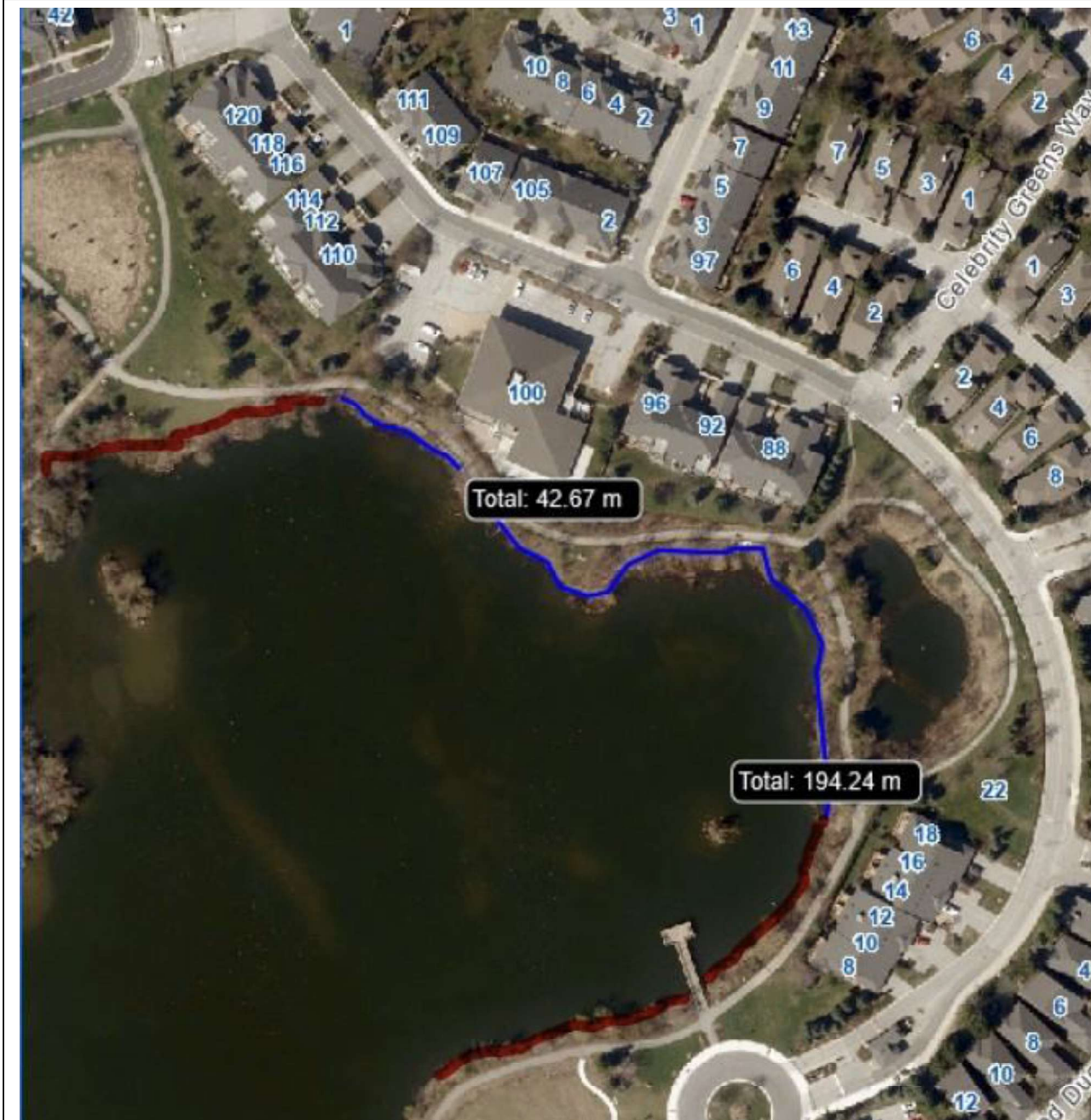
As with any process involving natural wildlife behavior, many aspects of advancing the program need to be considered to maintain its objectives.

- Science-based approach, understanding the species, environment, and integrated controls used in the management of each species
- Monitoring and data recording of each service and observation, identifying adverse effects, population trends, effects of mitigation, and assessment of this data for continuous improvement direction
- Environmental conditions that affect the typical natural or expected process of species being managed, specifically in this program, include how weather, land development, and avian influenza or other similar factors may influence trends and control parameters.

Although environmental factors and changes in on-site service times affected goose pressure on targeted sites, the use of technology- and science-based approaches has proven highly effective in mitigating goose pressure away from Swan Lake Pond and Toogood Pond.

It is recommended that;

- Placement of proven tools, such as safe and humane laser light control in strategic areas, should be continued
- habitat modification with seasonal silt fencing to prevent access to turf and walkways at Toogood Pond
- continued dense vegetation planting along the shoreline to prevent access of geese, similar to a silt fence
- continued public education on feeding geese
- continued monitoring and control of geese on other city properties to effectively manage larger areas of control, which benefits all areas, and other pond sites around targeted sites
- Continue with both daytime and twilight services to effectively manage goose populations away from control zones



 Continued fencing /shrub planting at Swan Lake to close of all accessible goose pathways to land areas, leaving an access spot for service boats