

# WAYS & MEANS

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## Playing a fair game

Golf course rids greens of geese, eases grounds maintenance.

A large flock of Canada geese has been trying to make its home at Oklahoma City's 300-acre Lincoln Park Golf Course for several years, but, recently, the city has finally been able to move the unwelcome squatters away from the most visible parts of the facility. Using a system that mimics the birds' natural alert calls, the city has kept its fairways clear of the pesky animals for nearly one year.

Lincoln Park Golf Course is a city-owned-and-operated, 36-hole course in Oklahoma City. About five years ago, 100 Canada geese infiltrated five different locations on the course, including several greens. "The geese [were] an ongoing problem," says Steve Carson, head golf professional and general manager for the facility. "They returned to the same location [each spring] and perpetuated themselves."

Golfers became perturbed when they had to vie with the geese for position at tees, but the biggest complaints were lodged by Lincoln Park's maintenance crew members, who had to remove goose droppings from greens and tee boxes before mowing. Each goose produced an average of a pound and a quarter of droppings each day. Crew members used air hoses on the greens and water hookups on the fairways to blow the droppings off the grass — not a pleasant task.

The course considered several methods for keeping the geese off the grounds, including using dogs to chase them. "But, it's expensive to feed and care for the dogs, and you usually need a live-in caretaker to handle the dogs," Carson says. "[That] didn't fit our situation. We tried a rubber alligator, but it didn't

bother the geese. We inquired about trapping the geese, but the Oklahoma Wildlife Department told us we had too many geese to use that method."

In fall 2002, Carson decided to test a device manufactured by Chicago-based Bird-X that broadcasts the birds' natural alarm and alert calls through a series of speakers. The geese recognize and

accommodate comfortably to the area.

Carson agreed to test the device for four months and selected the course's highest-profile area with the heaviest concentration of geese and droppings. "One week after the GooseBuster was installed, the geese relocated to a different part of the course — an area that was out of the mainstream and much more acceptable," Carson says. "I'd love to be able to send them 10 miles away, but we must be practical. It is such a marked improvement. They stopped congregating and dispersed."

However, a few months later, the geese slowly returned because the testing had stopped. Carson purchased a portable unit in summer 2003 and began moving it around the course to gradually relocate the geese. "A lot of them left the area completely, and some of them moved to other areas of the golf course," Carson says. "If we found they were trying to congregate in a certain area, we would set it up, and, in two to three days, they would move on out. They're staying out of the areas of the golf course that we want them to stay out of."

Golfers have not complained about the sounds produced by the device, and Carson plans to continue using it to move the geese to little-used areas of the lakeside park nearby. "We don't want to hurt them; just discourage them," Carson says.

As a result of keeping the geese off the course, the maintenance crew has an easier time mowing the greens. "[We used to spend] many hours cleaning the goose droppings off of the main play areas of the golf course on a daily basis," Carson says. "[The geese are] pretty to look at, but they sure can leave a mess around." ACC



Dr. Philip Whitford, a professor of biology at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, developed the technology that Lincoln Park Golf Course uses to keep geese off its greens.

respond instinctively to alert calls signifying uneasiness about potential threats and alarm calls indicating immediate danger. Reacting to either call, they evacuate without waiting to identify the source. The device, called GooseBuster, plays the calls at random intervals and at varying volumes, sequences and frequencies, which keeps the geese on guard and makes it difficult for them to