

BERKSHIRE LAKES MASTER ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Keeping you informed

PLEASE DON'T FEED THE DUCKS

Dear Neighbors,

You may have noticed what a bumper crop of Muscovy ducks we have this year. Dozens of them adorn the shoreline of Berkshire Lake and Henley Lake among others and, of course, attract the attention of the animal lovers among us. Unfortunately their numbers are problematic and will cause us all serious troubles if this trend continues.

Muscovy ducks are exotics brought here because some people thought they were attractive. They are, however, producers of very toxic waste. Their excrement contains exceedingly high levels of nitrogen and phosphate, both of which contribute to the growth of algae. In the last five years our lakes have been relatively algae free and have nutrient counts well within the guidelines for healthy storm ponds. Encouraging best practices as outlined by IFAS and eliminating broadcast spraying of harmful chemicals has encouraged the growth of helpful plants like Bacopa and discouraged harmful algal blooms. The explosion in our Muscovy duck population threatens the health of our lakes. Feeding the ducks only contributes to an increased threat of algae this summer. Providing food for the ducks may be an enjoyable pastime but will cause serious harm to our lakes and eventually to the Gulf of Mexico which is the eventual recipient of the water we choose to cleanse or pollute in our storm ponds.

Besides damaging the environment, feeding the ducks can be deadly to the ducks themselves. Concentrated groups of Muscovies create conditions in which botulism can develop in the soil, especially in warm weather. As the ducks peck around looking for food, they pick up bacteria and can become seriously ill or die. Mike Sweeney from Advanced Aquatics, the company which manages our lakes, explained that one of the communities he services lost all of their ducks due to over population and the spread of botulism. Even the native Mottled Ducks were eradicated by the disease.

So as members of the Board of Directors and the Lakes Committee for Berkshire lakes, we ask you, "PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE DUCKS!"

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation,

Berkshire Lakes Master Association
Board of Directors