

City Officials Fear Ducks Could Make Pine Lake's Water Unfit for Swimmers

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Pine Lake is virtually awash in ducks and city officials fear that their droppings will make the 12-acre lake unfit for swimming - by people, that is. City officials say they are concerned the level of bacteria in the lake could be on the upswing because there are more of the web-footed creatures, and therefore, more duck droppings. Duck droppings contain nutrients that increase the amount of algae growth which keeps the lake green and fertile, said Dave Kamps of state Environmental Protection Division. But duck droppings, in conjunction with other factors, such as warm temperatures and algae, also could raise the level of bacteria in the water, making the small lake unfit for swimming. So far, results of the weekly fecal-coliform tests in the lake have been "up to par," said Councilwoman Charlotte Neil, who chairs the city park committee. But as summer progresses, that could change.

During the last two or three years, the water fowl population has more than doubled to about 40 adult and baby ducks, city officials said. "Wildlife specialists have recommended we have 10 to 12 ducks for our size lake - especially if we're going to use the lake for swimming," she said. So far, attempts by city workers to trap the ducks without harm and to move them to nature centers have been unsuccessful. City officials say they will probably have to hire an animal expert to catch the ducks.

"We've found several places that are interested in the ducks but nobody wants to catch them. They want us to do that and then take the ducks to them," said Mayor Neil Copeland. The ducks, mostly Mallard and Muscovy, have become so accustomed to receiving food from local residents that they often venture onto city streets and are run over by passing cars. "They get on people's property or into the street and won't get out of the way when a car comes," said Mayor Copeland, whose home overlooks the lake. "You have to get out of the car and make them move."