

Christchurch Park

Duck Feeding by Visitors

'Let's go to the park and feed the ducks' - is a familiar phrase used in many families, where parents and grandparents remember the childhood pleasure of taking bread to the park for the ducks...

But - please Stop and Think before you do it!

Today, thanks to organizations such as the RSPB, we are more aware than ever of the consequences of this simple tradition. We now know that feeding bread to ducks (and geese and the other birds on our ponds) is bad for them, bad for the water in the ponds, and bad for the ecology of the park...

Because...

- * Bread is junk food for ducks, geese and other wildfowl. It has little nutritional value for them, is very low in protein, and contains additives that wildfowl aren't built to cope with. It is a very poor substitute for natural foods.
- * It is particularly bad for ducklings and chicks as it will fill them up without giving them the nutrients they need for the development of strong bones and internal organs. As time goes on these internal organs can become engorged and fatty, which can lead to complications such as heart disease, liver problems, other complications and an unnaturally short life.
- * It discourages ducks from foraging for their natural diet which is much healthier for them.
- * Feeding ducks all year round encourages them to breed all year round, but chicks born late in the year cannot survive the cold winter.
- * A duck that has eaten too much of the wrong food is sluggish, may lose its ability to fly, and thus may not be able to escape from predators.
- * When ducks and other birds swoop in to pick up bread thrown by visitors it often causes serious squabbling. This may be fun to watch, but it encourages unnaturally aggressive behaviour which may threaten the safety of smaller and weaker birds (usually the younger ones), which are unable to compete for handouts. This behaviour sometimes becomes a nuisance to humans too.

* It attracts more ducks and other birds than the natural resources of the ponds can sustain. This overpopulation in turn creates more pollution in the form of droppings.

* Uneaten bread sinks to the bottom of the ponds, causing them to silt up. Rotting food in ponds increases the nutrient level in the water which encourages algae to grow and reduces oxygen. This is bad for fish and other wildlife. Rotting food pollutes the water and helps deadly diseases and parasites to breed.

* Uneaten bread left on land encourages rats and other vermin, some of which (e.g. foxes) may prey on the ducks and ducklings.

There is plenty of natural healthy food for all the ducks, geese and other wildfowl in Christchurch Park. Ducks do best when they are left alone to eat natural foods.

Please do not feed the ducks bread (or any other 'people' food).
It will kill young birds and fish, encourage rats, silt up the ponds, and make the water dirty and polluted.

You can also help by telling others about the dangers
of feeding ducks irresponsibly.

Most people don't realize they are doing anything wrong,
some mistakenly believe they are helping.

The ponds in Christchurch Park were dredged
and cleaned as part of the Restoration Project funded by the
Heritage Lottery and Ipswich Borough Council.

Please help us now to keep the
water clean and the ducks and other wildfowl
healthy and safe .