

Woodwind Lakes



It's all right here

April 2013

Volume 2, Issue 4

Going Quackers

by Lee Suydam

I can think of no other issue that has created more passion and division than that of the feral Muscovy population in our community. It seems that our residents fall into one of two categories, those who are VERY pro-Muscovy and those who are VERY anti-Muscovy.

Legend has it that some years ago, there a Veterinarian we'll call, "Dr. Duck," who bought two Muscovy Ducks for his backyard in violation of the animal husbandry clause of the WWL Deed Restrictions. Dr. Duck loved to see the little fellows swimming in his swimming pool, nesting and raising offspring. Eventually, Dr. Duck moved away from our community but he did something which has since become illegal by a March 2010 amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He released his domesticated pets into the wild.

You see, the aim of this amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service), is to prevent more Muscovy Ducks from becoming feral. Under this law, no one may release Muscovy's to the wild including the urban wilds of local ponds and parks.

Muscovy Ducks, native to Mexico, South and Central America, are considered to be invasive poultry. They are a sedentary animal and do not have established migratory patterns. The hens lay frequently with a clutch of 8-16 white eggs that hatch in 35 days. Incidentally, the Muscovy is "quack less."

Often, you will see a malformed wing of the Muscovy called, "angle wing," also called slipped wing. The cause of angel wing is not conclusive. There are two basic theories, both concern overfeeding and proximity to humans. The first involves too much protein and the second involves too many sugars. To prevent angel wing, waterfowl should not be fed bread, popcorn or other human foodstuffs, especially in the first six weeks of life. As birds grow, the (wrist) joints can become retarded in their development relative to the rest of the wing, and possibly due to the weight of incoming flight feathers. If only one wing is affected it is usually

the left one. The result is a wrist which is twisted outwards and unable to perform its usual function, with feathers that are out of alignment resulting in wings at odd angles.

I must digress here and preach a little sermon on feeding ducks. Please don't. Ducks don't have teeth. They have a crop (pronounced craw), a small sack in the throat filled with small stones that grind their food. God made them perfect for certain kinds of food found in nature. People food is not good for them. You are doing a disservice if you disrupt the feeding patterns of migratory birds or if you encourage the over population of feral populations by feeding them. With abundant, unhealthy food readily available, the Muscovy will lounge and breed rather than forage. Migratory birds may linger in an unsuitable climate if fed.

Legal methods to restrict breeding of feral populations of Muscovy include NOT FEEDING, deterring with noise or chasing, vigorously shaking eggs and returning them to the nest to avoid relaying. Some say don't shake, just coat the egg with vegetable oil. Oh, please! Give me a break. I'll opt for not feeding and I hope you will do the same.

There are many complaints about the Muscovy. They disturb our gardens. They leave waste everywhere. They are a potential conduit for spreading avian influenza to humans. Most cases of avian influenza in humans have resulted from contact with infected poultry (e.g., domesticated chicken, ducks and turkeys) or surfaces contaminated with excretions from infected birds. On the up-side, the Muscovy provides a major benefit in the area of insect control. If they are not fed, they eat mosquitoes, mosquito larva, flies, spiders and ants. Basically, they eat any insect they can find. They also eat small fish, amphibians, reptiles, crustaceans and millipedes. Don't feed the ducks. They have a job to do and will not do it well if you disrupt the laws of nature. Feeding causes over population. NOT FEEDING is the kindest thing you can do for our ducks. And, it is the cheapest and best method of controlling over population.

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ARTICLE INFO

The *Woodwind Lakes Newsletter* is mailed monthly to all Woodwind Lakes residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to submit information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for consideration please email it to frank@sterlingasi.com. The deadline is the 9th of the month prior to the issue.

GARDENING TIPS

Presented By RCW Nurseries



Amid the projects and plans you have for this year's garden, you may appreciate that old Chinese fortune cookie warning, "Beware of what you wish for—you just might get it!" Try to take an organized, more efficient approach this year. Here are some timely tips that'll help you tackle that to-do list.

- Divide overgrown perennials.
- Using a straight-edge shovel, or sharp shooter, just slice the plant right down the middle. Water them well until they are established if rain is less than what we normally get. The replanted pieces will recover quickly. Do not fertilize them until they do.
- Feed rosebushes.
- Feed established and newly planted rosebushes after they have finished with their initial bloom with an organic fertilizer.
- Feed azaleas.
- Feed them after they have finished blooming. Cottonseed meal is a good choice. Feed them monthly until July. Prune them to shape before their final feeding. Do not feed newly planted azaleas with granular "azalea food" until they have been in the ground at least six months.
- Install edging around lawn areas and flower beds.
- While steel edging is used by landscaping companies, do-it-yourselfers can use heavy duty vinyl edging that performs just as well. The trick is to nail it into place every 3 feet, instead of the 5-foot most manufacturers recommend.
- Mulch the beds.
- Use humus, pine needles, or aged wood as for mulching, not rubberized mulch. Organic mulches improve the soil as they decompose. Rubber mulches do not, being better suited for playgrounds.
- Refresh window boxes and pots.
- Remove the previous plants, including the soil clinging to their roots. Add fresh potting soil and mix well. Arrange the pots of plants on the surface to make a pleasing arrangement. Once you're satisfied, pop them out and plant them.
- Repot houseplants.
- Take the plant out of the pot and slice off one-third of the sides and bottom of the root ball. Dump the old soil, wash the pot and rinse it well. Repot the trimmed plant with fresh potting soil. Trim off damaged leaves. The plants will look nicer and be revitalized.
- Move your potted houseplants outdoors.
- They'll be rejuvenated by the fresh air and sunshine. Just make sure to place them where they will only receive morning sun.
- Buy a second lawn mower blade.
- Buy a second one to change out in mid-season. Before you begin to mow first walk the lawn and pick up debris. Keep the mowing deck raised high. Unless the lawn is diseased, leave the clippings on it.
- Use Tree Gator bags and soaker hoses to keep trees and shrubs well watered.
- Your automatic in-ground sprinkler system will not keep these valuable foundation plants watered, especially during a prolonged dry spell. In the absence of adequate rain, fill the Tree Gator bags at least once per week to water your trees. Soaker hoses can be hidden under mulch. Use them at least once per week to deeply water your shrubs, in the absence of adequate rain.
- Check your automatic in-ground sprinkler system
- Each week take a walk and make sure only the ground is being watered, not the sidewalks and driveways. Check the rings of the impact sprinklers and remove St. Augustine grass that grew in there.
- Check your drip irrigation system
- Each week take a walk and make sure the drip irrigation heads are clear of weeds and mulch.
- Feed the lawn.
- Use either an organic fertilizer, or a high-quality, slow release lawn fertilizer with a 3-1-2 NPK (nitrogen - phosphorus - potassium) ratio. Do not use a weed-n-feed product as it can affect the growth of valuable ornamentals (shrubs, trees, perennials, and annuals).
- Keep your gardening education up to date from our local experts.
- Read the experiences and advice of Houston Chronicle's Kathy Huber and Lazy Gardener. Take time to listen to gardening information on Randy Lemon's GardenLine Show (KTRH 740 AM) and Tom Tynan's Home Show (KILT 610 AM).

ALONG THE FLYWAY

by Lee Suydam

On March 1st, I saw for the first time a pair of Wood Ducks on our lakes. One of two duck species that nest in trees (the other being the Fulvous Tree Duck), the Wood Duck does not quack but makes a weep sound. They breed in wooded swamps, shallow lakes, marshes or ponds, and creeks in eastern North America, the US west coast and western Mexico. They prefer to nest in the cavities of trees close to water and will take advantage of nesting boxes in wetland locations if available. They mainly eat berries, acorns, and seeds, but also insects.

Once seriously threatened, the population of the Wood Duck has increased a great deal in the last several years. The increase has been due to the work of many people constructing Wood Duck boxes and conserving vital habitat for the Wood Ducks to breed.

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Section 2 - 7715 Allegro Drive

Section 3 - 8742 Serenade Lane

Section 4 - 8027 Clarion Way

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Grounds Committee

Welcome to spring everyone....and, of course, we all know that summer follows shortly. Time to tackle our flowerbeds and lawns. Remember, EVERY homeowner in Woodwind Lakes is eligible to be a Yard of the Month recipient!!

One of our Grounds Committee members, Terry Buckner, came up with a great idea which we would like to share with everyone. For the first time, we will be judging backyards--those that are on the lakes--during the months of May and September. The other months of the year will be the traditional awards. We want to congratulate the following recipients for February: SECTION ONE: 8022 Sonata Court, SECTION TWO: 7715 Allegro Drive, SECTION THREE: 8742 Serenade Lane, SECTION FOUR: 8027 Clarion Way.

One of our goals for 2013 is to add more flowering shrubs to trails. We have decided to "adopt" an area by the adult pool wherein we will be adding additional flowering shrubs and other perennials. These plans are in addition to our adding plants to our pool areas. Our next meeting is April 9th at the home of Laura Gomez, 9335 Adagio Lane [section 4] at 7p. All residents are invited and encouraged to attend.

We would also like to recognize Michael Landry as a member of the Grounds' Committee.

Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network

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GHC 9-1-1 IN MAJOR NEW STEP TO INSURE PUBLIC SAFETY

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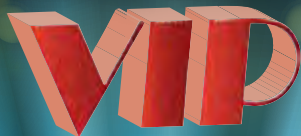
New, "next generation" technology can now send localized emergency alerts to cell and Internet phones, but only if residents register their phones online at www.911.org. Residents who rely on cell or Internet phones for communication, will not be contacted if a local emergency occurs unless they register—currently only landline (home or work) phones are in the 9-1-1 alerting system. The alerting service is free. Only phone owners' standard talk and text charges will apply if and when they receive an emergency notification. GHC will provide additional information and graphics upon request.

Registration is Quick, Easy, and Free.

Those who want to receive alerts can visit 911.org and click the sign up button. They will be guided through the process to complete the form, and will be offered answers to "frequently asked questions." Information needed to register: name, address (must be within GHC

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911 Network(Continued from Page 5)

service area), phone number, email address. Information is used only by public safety agencies to alert residents.

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Examples of “localized” emergencies include hazardous material spills, dangerous persons in the area, missing persons, or life-threatening weather. This service is provided by GHC 9-1-1 to all public safety agencies (fire, police) within the jurisdictions in the GHC service area (<http://www.911.org/participatingjurisdictions.asp>). The agencies/jurisdictions decide when to send an alert and also decide which people in their service areas need to know about the emergency. Residents will not receive an alert if they are not in the affected area. The service is a supplement to (not a replacement for) public safety warnings and information conveyed over TV, radio and other services.

Contact: Sonya Lopez-Clauson
Greater Harris County 9-1-1, Public Information Officer
832-237-9911 or 713-806-9495 (cell)

Women's Club



The Women's Club of Woodwind Lakes met in the home of Cindy Sheen on February 19, 2013 at ten o'clock. Co-hosts for the meeting were Judith Oyen and Nancy Pichardo. During the process of getting to know each other the members introduced themselves by sharing their place of birth and any unusual circumstances surrounding their birth. It was learned that several were born in their home, not in a hospital, several were not born in the United States and others had interesting family stories surrounding their birth.

Kim Flaviani, a Woodwind Lakes resident, was the guest speaker. The topic «Eating to Thrive» was inspirational for anyone interested in improving or taking charge of their health.

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Women's Club (Continued from Page 6)

The group learned the value of reading labels and assessing when it is advantageous to purchase organic or not necessary. For information on getting local organic produce, meat and eggs, contact Kim at Kimflav@yahoo.com.

A short business meeting followed the speaker. The Nominating Committee, to select a slate of officers for the next year, was announced. They are: Nancy Pichardo, Cindy Sheen, Judith Simons and Marianne West.

Members' birthdays during February were announced and honored. They were Nancy Pichardo and Gail Ford. Fran Smith read correspondence from our charity, The Mission of Yahweh, thanking the Women's Club of Woodwind Lakes for their generous donation of many toys given at Christmas. The Encore Book Club will meet the first Wednesday of April. They are reading Killing Kennedy.

The March meeting will meet in the home of Diana Mintner, March 19, 2013 at ten o'clock. The program topic is "Spring Into Fashion". Residences of WWL are welcome to join the Women's Club at any time during the year. Officers are listed in the front of the Newsletter.

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