

Beaches or birds: Choose one

Stop feeding the birds, the poop is polluting water, say environmentalists

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Don't feed the birds.

That's the message from the Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC), which will be setting out this summer to educate folks on why bird poop is keeping people from the beach.

"It's the goose poop, it gets converted into bacteria and right at the water's edge where the little kids play is the worst," said BARC executive director Jim Hudson.

The folks from BARC plan to hit Pier 4 and Bayfront parks throughout the season to let people know about the consequences of feeding the birds.

Two or three people will do the education periodically with an information flyer urging people not to feed geese and gulls, starting later this month.

Hudson is expecting some people might think the beach is closed for other reasons, such as sewage or industrial pollution.

"We're going to point out to them that, no, 90 per cent of the time the reason the beach is closed is because of bacteria from waterfowl."

The program announced at BARC's annual general meeting last night.

According to BARC, a single Canada goose can release fecal waste up to 60 times a day. The organization also cautions that feeding birds bread scraps deprives the animals of natural nutrients and can make them dependent on humans and less healthy.

Feeding birds can also attract more birds and create excessive excrement in the water and the sand, BARC cautions.

"The prime focus will be people who look like they are, or are about to, feed," Hudson. said.

"Or people who approach us and complain about the beaches too, we'll also educate them on what the reason is."

A city bylaw prohibits feeding or trying to feed wild birds or fish in a park.

HAMILTON HARBOUR SURVEY

A recent BARC survey, involving Mohawk College, found a few interesting facts.

7 -- Percentage of people who said they had not visited the harbour

52 -- Percentage of people who visited for recreation or harbour attractions

66 -- Percentage aware of restoration efforts

Cleaning up Randle Reef: Cited as the item where most improvement was needed. Creek clean-ups were second.

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