

Feeding Ducks at the Darebin Parklands

Please don't feed the ducks bread!

Feeding ducks is often a family favourite activity. Unfortunately feeding ducks bread is widely considered to cause more harm than good.

Bread is like junk food for ducks. It has very little nutritional value yet they love it! If eaten in moderation bread does little harm. However, if you consider the ducks at local ponds that are eating bread not just from your family but the families that visit before and after you, you can see that before long the birds have eaten much more bread than they should.

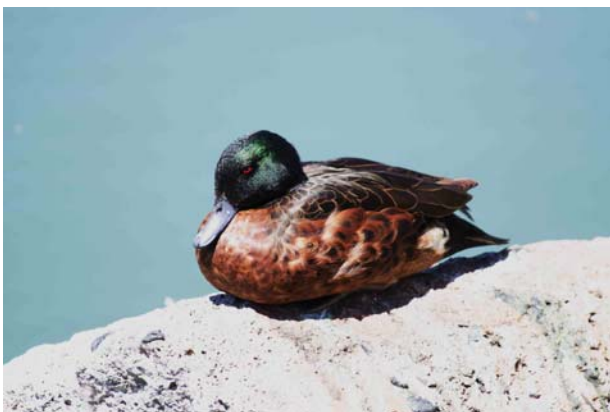
What problems can bread cause?

Malnutrition

Birds that fill up on bread are not eating enough of their normal diet and so are missing out on important vitamins and minerals. This can lead to abnormalities in chicks and ducklings such as weak and deformed bones. Small birds need lots for energy to keep warm and to fend for themselves. It is possible that if they fill up on bread they do not have room for the high energy foods (seeds, insects) necessary to keep them warm during the cold winter nights or to escape from predators.

Gut problems

Birds' digestive tracts were not designed to cope with bread. Dry bread in particular can swell up inside a bird and cause blockages which can sometimes be fatal. Bread can also become impacted in birds' digestive tracts, which can lead to infection and death.



What problems can feeding birds in general cause?

Behaviour

Birds can become tame and confident around people. This can make them vulnerable to attacks from pets and cruelty from other people. They too can become aggressive towards people.

Large birds can become more aggressive and dominant over small or young birds.

Birds can become dependant on being hand fed and chicks and ducklings do not learn how to forage for themselves.

Ducks will also tend to crowd around popular feeding spots making those spots a breeding ground for disease and bacterial infections.

Disease

Rotting food scraps and build-up of faecal matter adds nutrients to wetlands. This can cause algal blooms in warmer months.

Healthier alternatives

We do understand that some people will still really want to continue this family activity. If so, please feed them only very small amounts and use these healthier alternatives:

- Lettuce and other leafy greens
- Cracked corn, oats, or other grains
- Grated vegetables and fruit
- Why not let your kids dig up some worms from your garden?

Or what about doing your garden a favour and collect some snails, slaters and earwigs.

For further information please contact the Darebin Creek Management Committee on 9499 4454 or visit our website

www.dcmc.org.au