

Down and Dirty: Cleaning After Geese

BY PATRICK G. LEE

Armed with a re-engineered debris vacuum, 8-foot-wide sweepers and a Smart Car, pooper-scooper Jim Coniglione spends a lot of time scouring New York for traces of Canada geese.

Fortunately for him, he doesn't have to look too hard.

"A goose poops two pounds a day!" explains Mr. Coniglione, who runs his company, Scoopy Doo, out of Long Island. "When we're done with a property, it looks like a freshly vacuumed carpet...It's beautiful."

As school districts, city parks and golf courses gear up for the imminent September migration of several thousand more Canada geese to New York City, Mr. Coniglione is on a mission to prove he's the man for the cleanup job. His years of experience as a doggie-doo picker-upper have helped him adapt and

perfect his process for Canada geese, an effort that cost him thousands of dollars and involves customized, cutting-edge contraptions.

He first goes over the property with a motorized, spinning broom to loosen any stubborn chunks sticking to the grass, a process he calls "turd tickling." Then, with the grass primed for action, he uses the debris vacuum to comb through smaller areas. Finally, he makes a sweep of the land in a blue-and-silver, \$18,000 convertible Smart Car that pulls along a pair of large, cylindrical sweepers, each of which rotates and hurls goose poop into an attached hopper. He's used the contraption for homeowners, school districts and charity events.

He charges \$500 an acre.

"We ride it around like a Zamboni," he says. "When I'm cruising on the fields, I have the iPod tunes cranking and the



Jim Coniglione

Scoopy Doo's tricked-out debris vacuum picks up goose droppings.

top down."

But the competition thinks he's gone too far. They insist that the tried-and-true rake-and-dustpan method remains the best way to clean up after the birds.

"A lot of these companies try

to come up with all this crazy nonsense of gadgets," says Mike Micheline, founder and owner of Poop B Gone, one of Mr. Coniglione's main Long Island rivals.

"The bottom line is that the old bucket and scooper is the

Please turn to page A17

Down and Dirty: Cleaning After Geese

Continued from page A15

thing that does it. You have to have the tools that you know are going to work—it's just that simple," Mr. Micheline says.

Ron Vecchio, who runs a Long Island cleanup business called Minesweepers, agrees that a sweep-through with the old-school shovel and long-handled dustpan is indispensable, even though his company uses backpack blowers to try to get the job done faster.

Canada geese thrive in environments like New York City and Long Island, which lack natural predators, present minimal hunting pressure and abound with stable sources of water and food at soccer fields, public parks and lawns. In the wintertime, their local population swells to about 50,000 given the influx of birds that migrate in from Canada and other parts of New England, explains U.S. Department of Agriculture biologist and Canada goose expert Allen Gosser.

Mr. Gosser helps oversee a "capture and removal" program every summer to manage the geese population around New York City airports, given the ma-

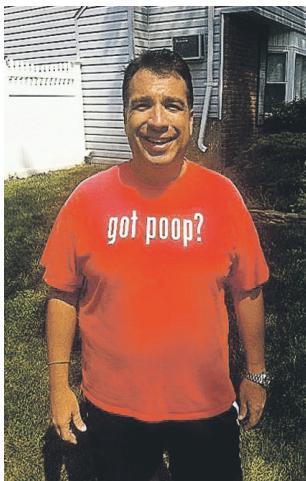
jor damage a goose-plane collision can cause. In 2009, a US Airways flight crash-landed on the Hudson River minutes after takeoff due to a collision with a flock of geese that disabled two of the plane's engines.

This summer, fewer than 1,600 Canada geese were removed from park areas within seven miles of La Guardia and JFK airports, he says.

Strategies to deal with the poop-prolific birds range from the firing of pyrotechnics and propane cannons to scare the geese to spraying affected areas with a mixture of grape-seed extract and hot peppers, which stings the animals' bills when they try to feed on the grass.

But as many homeowners with giant, lush lawns have found, nothing seems to work long term. Long Island resident Sharlene Frankel moved onto her two-acre, Hewlett Harbor property more than a decade ago, and the geese have been haunting her every year since.

"It's like a sea of doo-doo. I don't know what to tell you. It's a mess, it's like you can't walk," she says. "A lot of large yards, parks where the kids play soccer,



Jim Coniglione, owner of the Scoopy Doo cleanup company

the schools—it's a real nuisance...and no matter how much you chase them, they come back."

Ms. Frankel and her husband have tried everything—from hiring border collies to chase the geese away to spreading Jell-O over the lawn to deter them from landing—to little lasting effect. After hiring Mr. Coniglione for the first time in May, she

now swears by his service as "an expense, but a necessary one" if she ever plans on seeing her lawn in its original, green state.

Others too have adopted novel, high-tech approaches to deal with the perennial Canada geese problem.

Tom Baczyski, founder of Ontario-based Nature Calls Pet Service, broke into the Canada goose cleanup market in June, when he received a shipment he had long been waiting for: an \$8,000 custom-built tractor that weighs 500 pounds and holds up to 600 liters of poop.

It's basically the Smart Car contraption on steroids: In less than an hour, he can cover up to three acres of land thanks to the tractor's rapidly spinning brushes measuring four feet in diameter. Mr. Baczyski says he hopes to expand and franchise his business—along with the patented tractor technology—to New York.

But for now, it seems that Mr. Coniglione holds the title for most innovative New York pooper-scooper, a distinction he owes entirely to the Canada goose. "I love that bird," he says. "It's my favorite."

The Wall Street Journal: A15

Down and Dirty: Cleaning After Geese

BY PATRICK G. LEE

August 22, 2011

Armed with a re-engineered debris vacuum, 8-foot-wide sweepers and a Smart Car, pooper-scooper Jim Coniglione spends a lot of time scouring New York for traces of Canada geese.

Fortunately for him, he doesn't have to look too hard.

"A goose poops two pounds a day!" explains Mr. Coniglione, who runs his company, Scoopy Doo, out of Long Island. "When we're done with a property, it looks like a freshly vacuumed carpet...It's beautiful."

As school districts, city parks and golf courses gear up for the imminent September migration of several thousand more Canada geese to New York City, Mr. Coniglione is on a mission to prove he's the man for the cleanup job. His years of experience as a doggie-doo picker-upper have helped him adapt and perfect his process for Canada geese, an effort that cost him thousands of dollars and involves customized, cutting-edge contraptions.

He first goes over the property with a motorized, spinning broom to loosen any stubborn chunks sticking to the grass, a process he calls "turd tickling." Then, with the grass primed for action, he uses the debris vacuum to comb through smaller areas. Finally, he makes a sweep of the land in a blue-and-silver, \$18,000 convertible Smart Car that pulls along a pair of large, cylindrical sweepers, each of which rotates and hurls goose poop into an attached hopper. He's used the contraption for homeowners, school districts and charity events.

He charges \$500 an acre.

"We ride it around like a Zamboni," he says. "When I'm cruising on the fields, I have the iPod tunes cranking and the top down."

But the competition thinks he's gone too far. They insist that the tried-and-true rake-and-dustpan method remains the best way to clean up after the birds.

"A lot of these companies try to come up with all this crazy nonsense of gadgets," says Mike Micheline, founder and owner of Poop B Gone, one of Mr. Coniglione's main Long Island rivals.

"The bottom line is that the old bucket and scooper is the thing that does it. You have to have the tools that you know are going to work—it's just that simple," Mr. Micheline says.

Ron Vecchio, who runs a Long Island cleanup business called Minesweepers, agrees that a sweep-through with the old-school shovel and long-handled dustpan is indispensable, even though his company uses backpack blowers to try to get the job done faster.

Canada geese thrive in environments like New York City and Long Island, which lack natural predators, present minimal hunting pressure and abound with stable sources of water and food at soccer fields, public parks and lawns. In the wintertime, their local population swells to about 50,000 given the influx of birds that migrate in from Canada and other parts of New England, explains U.S. Department of Agriculture biologist and Canada goose expert Allen Gosser.

Mr. Gosser helps oversee a "capture and removal" program every summer to manage the geese population around New York City airports, given the major damage a goose-plane collision can cause. In 2009, a US Airways flight crash-landed on the Hudson River minutes after takeoff due to a collision with a flock of geese that disabled two of the plane's engines.

This summer, fewer than 1,600 Canada geese were removed from park areas within seven miles of La Guardia and JFK airports, he says.

Strategies to deal with the poop-prolific birds range from the firing of pyrotechnics and propane cannons to scare the geese to spraying affected areas with a mixture of grape-seed extract and hot peppers, which stings the animals' bills when they try to feed on the grass.

But as many homeowners with giant, lush lawns have found, nothing seems to work long term. Long Island resident Sharlene Frankel moved onto her two-acre, Hewlett Harbor property more than a decade ago, and the geese have been haunting her every year since.

"It's like a sea of doo-doo. I don't know what to tell you. It's a mess, it's like you can't walk," she says. "A lot of large yards, parks where the kids play soccer, the schools—it's a real nuisance...and no matter how much you chase them, they come back."

Ms. Frankel and her husband have tried everything—from hiring border collies to chase the geese away to spreading Jell-O over the lawn to deter them from landing—to little lasting effect. After hiring Mr. Coniglione for the first time in May, she now swears by his service as "an expense, but a necessary one" if she ever plans on seeing her lawn in its original, green state.

Others too have adopted novel, high-tech approaches to deal with the perennial Canada geese problem.

Tom Baczyski, founder of Ontario-based Nature Calls Pet Service, broke into the Canada goose cleanup market in June, when he received a shipment he had long been waiting for: an \$8,000 custom-built tractor that weighs 500 pounds and holds up to 600 liters of poop.

It's basically the Smart Car contraption on steroids: In less than an hour, he can cover up to three acres of land thanks to the tractor's rapidly spinning brushes measuring four feet in diameter. Mr. Baczyski says he hopes to expand and franchise his business—along with the patented tractor technology—to New York.

But for now, it seems that Mr. Coniglione holds the title for most innovative New York pooper-scooper, a distinction he owes entirely to the Canada goose. "I love that bird," he says. "It's my favorite."