

Lab trying to get the best of geese defending their nests



A goose stands on a ledge outside the entrance to Wilson Hall. *Photo by Fermilab's Angela Bellavance.*

In the last few weeks, aggressive geese have caused problems across the Fermilab site. As geese and human beings are trying to occupy the same space during the goose nesting season, finding an acceptable form of peaceful coexistence is a challenge. For members of FESS Roads and Grounds and other lab employees handling the problem, it is a frustrating game of balance that involves geese population control and deterrent measures of varying kinds.

"We realize the magnitude of the problem," said ecologist Rod Walton of FESS. "The lab has taken many steps toward mitigating the problem, even if we don't publicize every measure that we take."

After a Technical Division employee was attacked by a goose and missed several days of work, TD Associate Head Romesh Sood was concerned that the lab might be overlooking a dangerous situation. "This is not the first time a goose has attacked. Employees were asking if the lab cared more about the birds than the people," said Sood. "I took it to the highest level and found out the lab is responding very well."

Bill Griffing, head of ES&H, explained that the lab has used a number of measures over the years to deter the geese from nesting in frequently traveled lab areas, including putting netting on the ground, spraying noxious non-toxic substances on the grass, and installing noisemakers. But the goose population lives here year 'round; eventually, Griffing said, they realize that those measures aren't threats. Currently, Griffing and Walton are working on removing nests and on other population control measures. This week they plan to bring in Border Collies, with the dogs herding the geese until, ideally, the tired-out geese leave.

The goose mating season typically ends in April, so geese are expected to remain highly aware of humans, and can be potentially aggressive until their goslings are born. Tips on how to stay safe around aggressive geese can be found in the [April 2 Safety Tip](#).

-- Rhianna Wisniewski