

9-1-2002

Crying fowl

Furman University

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Recommended Citation

University, Furman (2002) "Crying fowl," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 3 , Article 39.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol45/iss3/39>

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Crying fowl

The residence halls weren't the only area of the Furman campus beset by overcrowding this fall. A major influx of Canada geese caused a variety of problems both on and around the lake.

While the university worked to address the situation, Furman magazine decided to seek out the avian point of view. Here's the perspective from one Branta Canadensis:

Once we were appreciated, even celebrated. We were pictured in university brochures and featured in *South Carolina Wildlife*.

We were "Furman's Canada geese." Life was sublime.

Today, we are labeled "unmanageable" and "overly aggressive." We are accused of terrorizing small children, attacking sunbathing coeds and displacing the indigenous swans and ducks. Plus, they say we're creating a health hazard by leaving tell-tale reminders of our presence along the lake shore — and on the soles of people's shoes.

As for the university employees that once gladly fed us, they're shooting guns each morning in an attempt to scare us away. They may be firing blanks, but they're also making it perfectly clear where we stand in the lakeside pecking order.

And all of this because we had the audacity to get comfortable — and to invite our friends from up North to "Come on down."

Everything was fine when there were just a few of us. But now that our numbers have grown to more than 500 (and counting), we've become *gandera non grata*. Rumor has it that Furman is trying to find us a new home in a less populated area, and that the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources may soon swoop in and take us away.

Granted, things have gotten a bit crowded around here. And we may have brought some of this negative attention on ourselves.

We shouldn't have scared that 5-year-old (and his parents) half to death, but in our defense, we were hungry, he had the bread, and we do tend to flock to the nearest food source. We have also agreed to provide restitution to the elderly gentleman who injured himself while trying to avoid us. We're sorry he slipped on those droppings, although we suspect that some snooty swans set us up.

As for the coeds who were catching some rays, we really weren't being excessively forward. Our nips and nudges were nothing more than friendly overtures. We had no idea those girls were so scantily clad until they lit out for the dorms. They should chalk it up as a learning experience: It's hard to run and fasten your bikini top at the same time.

OK, we admit it. We're not perfect. We've done some bird-brained things. But is there no middle ground here?

After all, we like Furman. It nurtures our nesting instincts. We enjoy drinking from wisdom's fountain pure. And we find the emphasis on engaged learning to be uplifting.

So we're hoping we can work out a way to settle this flap. Perhaps our friends, the Muscovy ducks, could serve as arbitrators. Better yet, have the university form a task force! That's sure to give us at least a two-year reprieve.

In the meantime, we'll just try to fly under the radar and avoid those who may have foul play in mind. And if we are ultimately asked to leave, we won't let it get us down. We'll simply take off for bluer skies and calmer waters.

We don't need to ruffle any more feathers than we have already.

