

# NOBLE NEWS & VIEWS

**WILDLIFE**

## 3 Ways to Attract More Ducks to Your Pond



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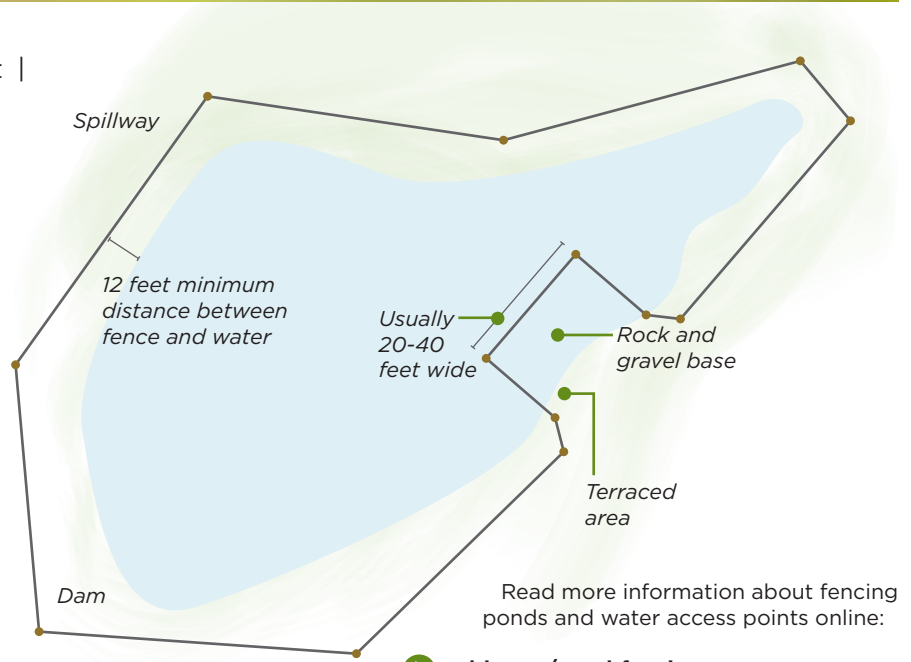
Some ponds attract more ducks, and attract ducks more consistently, than other ponds. What can be done to increase the likelihood of ducks visiting a pond? The following management strategies increase the likelihood of migratory ducks visiting a pond.

### 1. INCREASE WATER CLARITY.

**Clear water encourages aquatic plants, aquatic snails and several aquatic insects, which are primary foods of migratory ducks.**

- When livestock activity at a pond stirs up clay turbidity and creates bare soil along the shoreline, fencing all or a majority of a pond perimeter can improve water clarity and allow growth of shoreline vegetation. When a pond is needed for livestock water, most of a pond can be fenced while still providing an access point for livestock.

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[noble.org/pond-fencing](https://noble.org/pond-fencing)

[noble.org/floating-polyethylene-pipe](https://noble.org/floating-polyethylene-pipe)



- When erosion in a watershed creates clay turbidity in a pond, options to reduce this condition include reducing tillage, reducing livestock grazing pressure, shaping and vegetating gullies, placing rock weirs in gullies, spreading seed and fertilizer on bare soil areas, or maintaining a thick grass buffer (biofilter) adjacent to a pond. Information about rock weirs is provided in the Noble publication, “Rock Weirs and Flumes Can Prevent Erosion” ([www.noble.org/rock-weirs-flumes](http://www.noble.org/rock-weirs-flumes)).
- When abundant fish such as bullheads or common carp stir up clay turbidity or when fish such as grass carp inhibit aquatic plant growth, they can be eliminated by treating a pond with a fish toxicant such as rotenone or by draining a pond (note: these treatments also remove desirable fish that might be present). Information about rotenoning and draining ponds is provided in these articles: “Rotenone can remove undesirable fish from a pond” ([www.noble.org/rotenone-remove-undesirable-fish](http://www.noble.org/rotenone-remove-undesirable-fish)) and “Fish population renovation during a drought” ([www.noble.org/fish-population-drought](http://www.noble.org/fish-population-drought)).

## 2. REDUCE DISTURBANCE.

### Human activity near a pond can scare away ducks, causing them to relocate elsewhere.

- When traffic on a farm or ranch road or livestock feeding activity scares ducks from a pond, the road or feeding activity can be moved away from the pond, to reduce disturbance.
- When traffic on a public, farm or ranch

road scares ducks off a pond, a couple of rows of evergreen trees can be planted between the road and pond to create a visibility screen to reduce disturbance. Such a visibility screen also can help reduce trespass poaching by making the ducks “out of sight, out of mind” for some would-be poachers.

- When excessive hunting activity scares ducks from a pond and prevents population buildup (ducks are gregarious), reducing the frequency of hunting at a pond can help increase duck numbers.

## 3. ADD DUCK FOOD PLANTS.

### Adding a previously unavailable duck food or increasing the diversity of foods can attract more ducks.

- When oaks or native pecan trees are not present near a pond, they can be planted near the shoreline to attract mallard and wood duck during years when the trees produce acorns or pecans. These plantings should usually be protected with net wire beaver exclosures to prevent beaver from cutting down planted trees. Erecting beaver exclosures around existing trees that are strategically located near a pond is also a good practice to prevent beaver from cutting down established desirable trees. Information about beaver exclosures is provided in the Noble annual report article “Exclosures for Preventing Beaver Damage” ([www.noble.org/exclosures-for-preventing-beaver-damage](http://www.noble.org/exclosures-for-preventing-beaver-damage)) and on pages 2-5 of the January 2016 Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society Newsletter ([bit.ly/tctws-jan2016](http://bit.ly/tctws-jan2016)).
- When emergent duck food plants such as

barnyard grass or smartweed are absent, they can be seeded onto wet mud flats during late spring or early summer drought-induced drawdowns.

- When a pond manager has the means to draw down and refill a pond at will, a pond can be drawn down during late spring or early summer, and shallow portions of the pond can be planted with a crop such as Japanese millet or sorghum. The crop is allowed to grow and produce grain, then the pond is refilled to attract ducks. As long as the standing crop is not manipulated in any manner other than flooding, ducks can legally be hunted at such a pond.
- When waterfowl are simply observed and not hunted near a pond, managers can scatter grains such as corn, sorghum or wheat, along the shoreline or in shallow water to attract and feed ducks. Hunting near a pond where grains have been scattered is illegal.

Pond owners implementing such management should realize migratory ducks can be unpredictable. A pond providing the best possible habitat could still have few or no ducks on a specific date. Season, local temperatures, temperatures north of the pond, duck abundances in the flyway, water levels, alternative feeding and roosting sites in the area, cold fronts and other factors also influence whether ducks visit a pond on a specific date. Nevertheless, a pond with better habitat and less disturbance typically supports more ducks than a pond with poor habitat and more disturbance. 🐾