



Canal &
River Trust

PRESS RELEASE

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WATERWAYS BECOMING NO 'DOUGH' AREAS FOR DUCKS

Ducks up and down the country are benefitting from thinner waistlines and cleaner homes after figures released this week show the public are choosing to feed them healthier treats.

Last spring the Canal & River Trust, the charity which cares for more than 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales, called on visitors to leave the bread at home and instead swap to healthier treats such as seeds, lettuce and peas which are more like a duck's natural diet.

Today, the charity has released data which shows a 20% drop in the number of people feeding ducks bread – over 80,000 fewer loaves. And the good news continues, as the number of people feeding ducks healthier snacks such as seeds, fruit and vegetables has doubled ⁽¹⁺²⁾.

Despite the positive changes however and the overwhelming public response over the last 12 months, there's still work to be done as a hefty 3.5 million loaves of bread are still being thrown into canals, rivers, ponds and lakes every year and potentially polluting the environment.

Today, ahead of the official start of spring and at a time when thousands of new ducklings are due to hatch on its waterways, the Canal & River Trust is calling on people to continue their good work and spread the word even further ⁽³⁾.

Uneaten soggy bread can cause a build-up of bad nutrients which can lead to greater algae growth, spread disease and encourage pests such as rats.

The Trust's waterways host hundreds of thousands of ducks and other waterfowl and the charity takes its responsibility of keeping their homes safe very seriously. It wants the millions of people who enjoy the much loved family tradition of feeding the ducks to be able to enjoy it for generations to come.

Throwing bread into a canal or river can create overcrowding of bird populations, as the birds will flock to the same location in search of their starchy treat.

Too many ducks or waterfowl in one place can stress the birds and lead to their habitats being damaged. It also creates excessive amounts of bird droppings which, along with being smelly and slippery underfoot, can reduce water quality and clog waterways with harmful algae.

Peter Birch, National Environment Manager for the Canal & River Trust, said: “We’re really pleased with the public response to our campaign so far and the way people are changing their duck feeding habits. However there’s still work to be done and still too much bread is being dumped in the waterways. We need more people to get the word out and encourage everyone to feed the ducks sensibly.

“It only takes a few simple changes such as swapping bread for healthy food that is closer to a duck’s natural diet – like oats, corn or peas. If everyone avoids going to the same duck-feeding hotspots and exercises portion control that would also make a big difference.”

The recent public poll, carried out on behalf of the Canal & River Trust, found that people in the south-west have been the most conscientious with a 23% drop in the number of people feeding ducks bread with the north-east closely behind with a 22% fall.

The charity is giving away a free booklet packed with tips on the right food to feed the ducks which includes lots of activities for children. To receive this, along with your free Quack Snack pouch to store your healthy duck treats, Text QUEST to 70123

For more information on the campaign visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/ducks

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Notes to Editors:

For more information, interviews, video footage, or images contact Emma Aitken, National Campaigns Manager, on 07733 124580 or

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Images available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6cv2fmju9o6ezdi/AAApYY-x_B46wFFJinxnYPBxa?oref=e&n=347815707

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation’s third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

References

Research was carried out by BDRC Continental on behalf of Canal & River Trust. The survey was carried out between 8th-17th January 2016 with a nationally representative sample of 1,800 people across England and Wales (E&W). Data is based on people feeding the ducks in England and Wales at a canal, river, lake, pond or reservoir. The survey found that more than 15 million people fed the ducks last year in E&W, based on the total population being approx. 45,612,000. In 2015, 60% (of 15mil) fed them white bread which equates to 9 million people. In 2016, 47% (of 15 mil) fed them white bread which equates to 7 million people. The fall of 2 million people is a 22% drop between 2015 and 2016.

- (1) On average we've estimated that people would feed the ducks with half a loaf of bread each year. A double decker bus is 112.5 cubic metres. A loaf of bread is 0.00455 cubic metres (0.25cm x 0.13cm x 0.14cm). $112.5/0.00455 = 24,725$ (nearly 25,000 loaves will fit into one double decker bus). In 2015, 9 million people fed the ducks white bread which equates to 4.5 million loaves of bread. $4.5 \text{ million}/25,000 = 180$ double decker buses full of white bread each year (or 15 per month) or 375,000 loaves per month (4.5 million/12months). In 2016, 7 million people fed the ducks white bread which equates to 3.5 million loaves of bread. $3.5 \text{ million}/25,000 = 140$ double decker buses full of white bread each year (or 12 buses per month) or 291,667 loaves per month (3.5 million/12 months). Comparing 2015 data with 2016 data, this equates to 83,333 less loaves being thrown into the canal in the last year ($375,000 - 291,667$) or 6944.4 per month ($83,334/12$ months). So nearly 7,000 less loaves are being thrown into the canal each month.
- (2) The proportion of people feeding ducks seeds has risen from 8% to 16%, and for fresh fruit and veg 2% to 5%
- (3) The first day of spring in 2016 is Sunday March 20th (according to the astronomical definition).

Statistics broken down by geographical regions:

| Geographical region | % of population have fed the ducks with white bread 2015 | % of population have fed the ducks with white bread 2016 | % change of feeding white bread down by... |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| London | 63% | 46% | 17% |
| South east | 61% | 47% | 14% |
| South west | 63% | 40% | 23% |
| East | 55% | 47% | 8% |
| East Midlands | 51% | 39% | 12% |

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|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| West Midlands | 64% | 54% | 10% |
| Wales | 57% | 48% | 9% |
| Yorks/Humber | 64% | 53% | 11% |
| North east | 69% | 47% | 22% |
| North west | 57% | 48% | 9% |