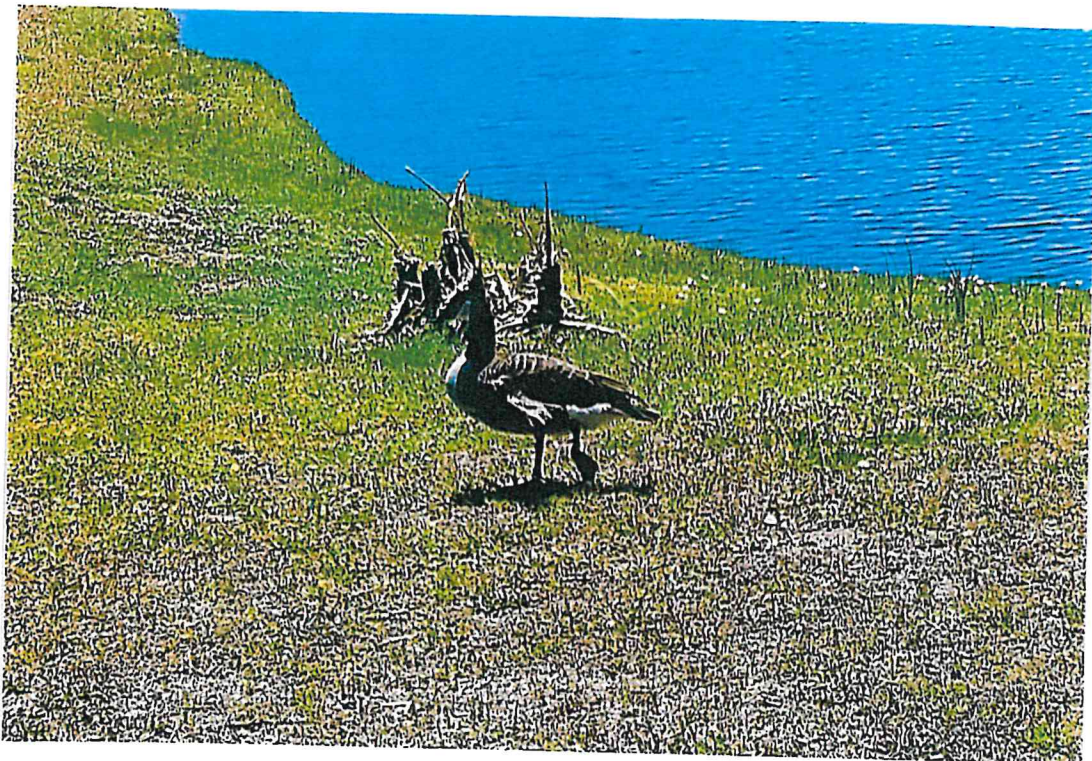


Broken Wing – A story of survival

Curtis Holbrook



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My wife and I live on a pond in a neighborhood called Rivermist. We have gators in the back yard (the current one is about 7 feet long. We also have a constantly changing flock of geese. They come mainly to our yard to pick off the remains of our bird feeder. During $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year we have local geese – others come from farther north during part of the year.

Broken Wing was one of five chicks, but that was only one family group. The bigger the family, the more power they had over smaller ones. A given flock could be 20 to 30 geese. Four years ago, Broken Wing's family group flew off without him. When they returned, a few months later, we saw that he was seriously injured. One wing was sticking straight out from the side of his body. We suspected he had been attacked by a dog or coyote. We contacted the Oak Island bird rescue and were told they would look at him if we could catch him. We were told to wrap him in a towel, but we knew that would injure his wing further. We did see a neighbor go flying by our window one day with a giant fishing net trying (unsuccessfully) to catch him.

Unfortunately, Broken Wing became outcast from the group. They would send him ahead to see if there was food, but then peck him if he tried to eat. We didn't expect him to survive the winter. One day we decided to interfere, and tried taking a plastic cup of food directly to him, kicking our way through the flock. Amazingly, he immediately scarfed down the feed and waited for more. We continued to feed him, and he continued to bring new flocks to our back yard for about two more years. Then, suddenly, he stopped showing up.

We were afraid he had died, but continued to feed his flock. One day, I spotted him at another pond in the neighborhood. And he had a mate! We were so happy to see that he was no longer alone. We don't see him as often these days as he and his mate seem to be happier on the big pond. But we'll never forget the strength and bravery he showed us and we're grateful we got to witness his life.

