

Getting Your Ducks in a Row: How to Prevent Duck Problems for Pool Owners

- **Cut back shrubbery** to discourage nest building behavior.
- **Remove nest material** if the nest does not contain eggs.
- **Cover the pool** to prevent the problem.
- **Never provide food** as this will encourage them to stay.
- **Do not interfere** with a nest that has eggs within.

Like parents of any species, ducks want to start their families somewhere safe, where they will have access to food and water. A backyard pool can look ideal! Unfortunately, this isn't true. Once ducklings get in a pool, they are often unable to get back out and end up drowning.

The best way to prevent this sad reality is by making your pool inhospitable to prospective duck parents. By trimming back your shrubbery, you're removing potential nesting sites. Covering your pool removes a source of water and security. If your pool cannot be covered, float an inflatable swan in the pool. Swans are the natural enemy of Mallards. You can also string reflective Mylar strips above the pool so the ducks won't be able to land. If a duckling has found its way into your pool and can't get out, consider providing a pool noodle or ramp so it can escape.

If you see a female Mallard (the brown one) looking around in the bushes for a site to make her nest, scare her off with a hose and loud noises. Be persistent! If you're worried a duck has made a nest in your yard, look in nearby bushes, ivy, or other ground cover. As long as a nest does not have eggs inside, it is not illegal to remove the nest or scare off the parents. However, it is illegal to disturb them after the nest becomes active. Once there are eggs, you will have to wait for them to hatch before scaring away the family.

There is normally no second chance for abandoned ducklings, so do not try to catch the mother. She may panic and fly away—and she may not return to her young. Instead, give them a way to leave without flying and shoo them all as a family.



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