

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

waterfowl fed in the harvested peanut fields during both foggy/misty and sunny/clear conditions.

Damage to growing peanuts by birds has been documented (Mott, et. al. 1972) but predation on peanuts by resident Canada Geese has not. I found (Drennen, 1991) that landowners adjacent to the refuge believe that the resident Canada Geese population damage and consume green peanuts in late summer. In August, 1991, a farmer reported to me that geese were pulling up peanuts and consuming them in the "peg stage" (immature peanuts that are connected to the "runner vine"). On investigation, I found many cracked shells of peg peanuts and direct signs of geese such as feces, feathers and tracks. Other problems noted were trampling and breaking of the "runner vines" from the main peanut plant by flocking of Canada Geese in the planted peanut rows. The farmers believed that because plants were damaged, this would lead to the infection of the white mold fungus (Sclerotium rolfsii) throughout their and other peanut fields in the area. This mold is the most severe disease of peanuts in the state (Ala. Coop. Ext. Ser. 1990). However, no data has been found to link bird use of peanut fields to white mold infection and the potential role of birds as vectors of plant diseases remains a matter of speculation (Hiller and Scanlon, 1978).

On 13 May 1993, I observed resident Canada Geese foraging for unsprouted peanut seeds. Sprouted plants (2.54-7.62 cm. tall) had had their cotyledons nipped, and new leaves at the apical tip were browsed. No damage was noted on axial branch leaves. I flagged three damaged plants and found on 28 May 1993, vigorous regrowth (2.54-7.62 cm.) on two of the plants. The other plant seemed to be stunted. However, no lasting damage was noted on all flagged plants in subsequent visits to the study sites in the summer.

### CONCLUSION

Peanuts planted on ENWR were readily consumed by birds in the fall when they were left in the field (waste peanuts). Five species of waterfowl, other than the resident Canada Geese, were noted to feed on waste peanuts in upland (non-flooded) sites. Five non-waterfowl species were observed to

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feed on waste peanuts while 12 bird species use the fields for their daily activities such as feeding (not on peanuts), hunting, resting, etc.

Resident Canada Geese were documented to consume peanuts in the peg stage and to trample peanut plants, especially the runner portion of the plant. No permanent damage to plants flagged on the refuge was noted. Farmers expressed concern about white mold infection of their and neighboring peanut fields. **Daniel J. Drennen**, Eufaula N.W.R., Rt.2, Box 97-B, Eufaula, AL 36027

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