

CNC Fish and Turtle Feeding Policy

More than ever, it has become important to provide opportunities for children to explore nature. Most parents would agree their child's interaction with nature is minimal. Playing for hours in a field or a stream is an alien concept to most children who are more in tune with electronics than the outdoors. The Cincinnati Nature Center hopes that by providing activities such as pond dipping at Matt's Pond, explorer packs, self-led trail guides, bird feeding stations, and fish and turtle feeding at Crosley Lake, children will be encouraged to interact and explore nature at their own pace.

Supplemental feeding was discontinued several years ago because waterfowl ate the food intended for fish and turtles. This created many problems for people and for the birds. Below are reasons why waterfowl should not be fed:

- _ It reduces the need for foraging for natural food items as they are already "full."
- _ It makes them dependent and can cause aggression once they learn to expect handouts.
- _ They become habituated, losing their natural fear of humans and other predators.
- _ It causes them to congregate, making them more susceptible to disease.
- _ Droppings on the boardwalk are unsightly and inconvenient for visitors.

It is clear that any feeding policy must be carefully handled. CNC wants to provide experiences for visitors without threatening the health of our wildlife and ecosystems. To this end, our feeding policy is based on the following conditions:

- Feeding will be allowed only at the boardwalk on Crosley Lake, where the fish and turtles are used to hand feeding and will consume the food quickly. Unlike other ponds on the property, this lake is large enough to handle a moderate influx of nutrients from supplemental feeding. Our volunteers will continue to monitor water clarity, dissolved oxygen, and nitrogen levels. If these levels change, permission to provide additional feed may be discontinued.
- Only fish and turtle food sold by Cincinnati Nature Center will be permitted. The food available for purchase is a floating pellet recommended for artificial pond feeding and will provide a balanced diet to help maintain the health of the fish and turtles at the lake.
- Visitors must offer food in moderation, just as you would feed the fish in your own aquarium. Feed what the fish will eat within a few minutes. There should be no food left floating when you walk away. Excess food will sink to the bottom and rot, adversely affecting water quality. Plus, extra food will attract waterfowl.
- All feeding must cease if waterfowl move towards the boardwalk. It may seem fun to feed waterfowl, but it is harmful for their health and causes them to associate people with food. Please stop feeding immediately if waterfowl approach.

In short, CNC's fish and turtle feeding policy requires offering the right foods in moderation at the right times at the permissible location. Most parks and wild areas do not permit feeding because it is difficult to teach the public how to do so without incurring the problems mentioned above. Please respect the policies of whatever park you are visiting. The policy here is not transferable to other parks or even to other bodies of water on Cincinnati Nature Center's land. This unique activity is permitted for the enjoyment of our visitors and is not something essential for the well-being of wildlife.

Please stop by the Visitor Service Desk in the Rowe building and pick-up an informational sheet on the animals you may see at the lake. Bluegill and Smallmouth Bass will readily come for food, while you may only get a glimpse of the Channel Catfish. Common turtles are the American Snapping Turtle and the Red-Eared Slider. Keep a watchful eye out and you may see a Midland Painted Turtle or a Spiny-Soft Shell Turtle.

Have an enjoyable and educational experience while at Powel Crosley Lake this summer!