

Canada Goose

Canada Goose

Appearance

Canada Geese are big waterbirds with a long neck, large body, large webbed feet, and wide, flat bill. Sexes look alike (sexually monomorphic), although the male is slightly larger. There is no seasonal variation.



Canada Geese have a black head with white cheeks and chinstrap, black neck, tan breast, and brown back.

Canada Goose Appearance

Babies (called “goslings”) are yellow with grey-green feathers on their back and sometimes their head, depending on the subspecies.



Canada Goose goslings

Canada Goose Appearance

They are born with black bills and feet. Their bill has comb-like ridges around the outside edges, which helps them feed.



Canada Goose gosling

Canada Goose Sounds

From The Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/>

CALLS

Various loud honks, barks, and cackles. Also some hisses.

Listen to the songs and calls at:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Canada_Goose/sounds

Canada Goose

Diet

Canada Geese eat grain from fields, graze on grass, and dabble in shallow water by tipping forward and extending their necks underwater.



Canada Geese grazing in a corn field.



Canada Geese grazing on grass.

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Canada Geese feeding in the water.



Dabbling Canada Geese.

Canada Goose

Diet

Canada geese are primarily herbivores, although they sometimes eat small insects and fish.

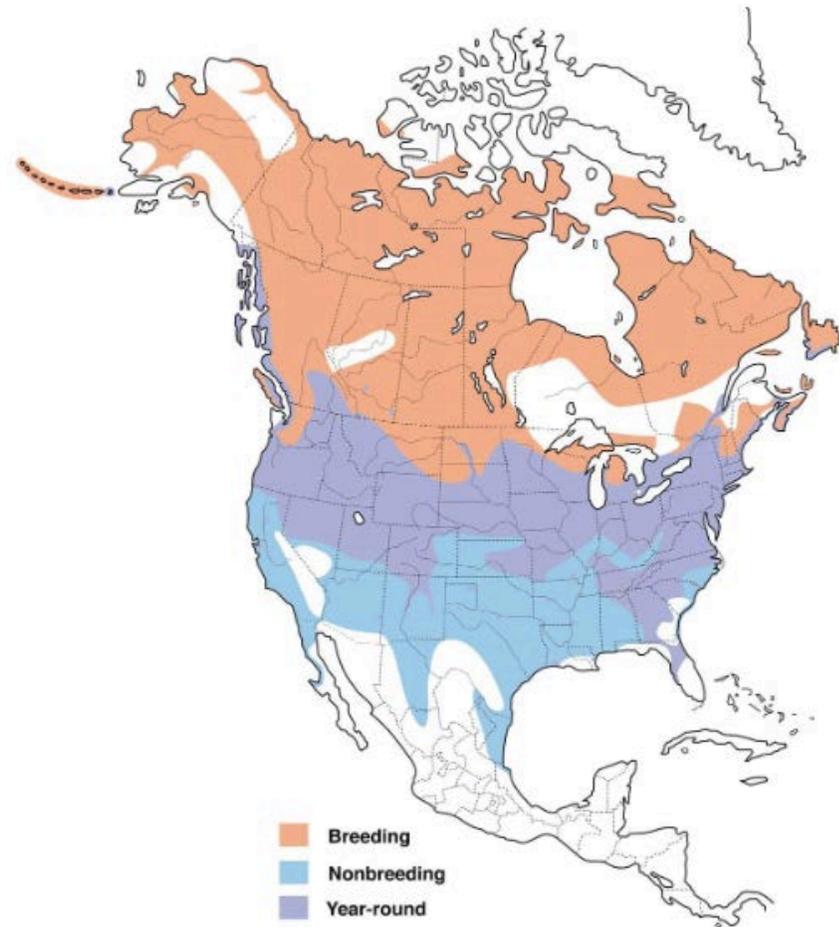


Canada Goose with a fish

Canada Goose

Range

Some Canada Geese winter in their breeding region while others migrate.
Canada Geese are seen year-round in DuPage County.



Canada Goose Habitat

In winter, Geese can remain in northern areas, including DuPage County, with some open water and food resources even where temperatures are extremely cold.



Canada Goose Habitat

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This goose found some grass to eat in spite of the snow!



Canada Geese huddled at a spot of open water in winter.

Canada Goose Habitat

Canada Geese live in a many different habitats near water, grassy fields, and grain fields.



Canada Geese near water



Canada Goose in a grassy field



Canada Geese in a grain field

Canada Goose Behavior

Canada geese mate for life. While the gander (male) does not incubate the eggs, he is always nearby guarding and defending the nest and territory against intruders. The female selects the site and does much of the nest construction. Canada Geese prefer a nesting spot from which they can have a fairly unobstructed view in many directions.



Canada Geese nest on the ground, often on a muskrat mound or other slightly elevated site, near water.



The female adds down feathers and body feathers, beginning after the second egg is laid.

Canada Goose Behavior

To avoid detection on the nest, the female will lie flat and motionless with her long neck outstretched.



A female Canada Goose on her nest, with outstretched neck.



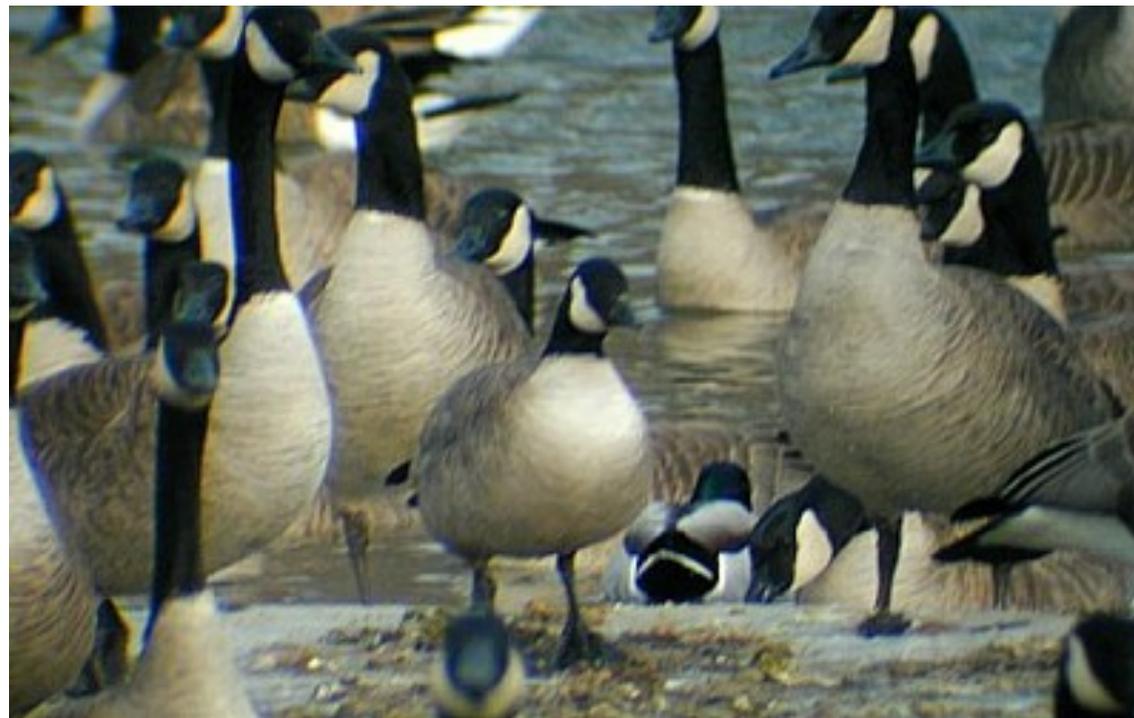
Another view of a female Canada Goose on her nest with her neck outstretched.

Canada Goose Behavior

Occasionally other species are found with flocks of Canada Geese, as Snow Geese, White-fronted Geese, and Cackling Geese.



A Snow Goose with Canada Geese in the background.



A Cackling Goose (the small goose in the middle) with a flock of Canada Geese.

Canada Goose Literature/Prose

Canada Geese

Heard from afar
I await
The flutter of your wings.

by Vanessa Sorensen
from *Zen Birds*



Canada Goose

Feeders

Mowing and maintaining lawns down to the water's edge or maintaining very large lawns anywhere near water will invite Canada Geese. Consider putting up a nest platform to attract a breeding pair. Make sure you put it up well before breeding season.



Canada Goose Feeders

It is best not to feed geese or ducks. This can result in malnutrition .

It would seem that providing food for ducks and geese would make them healthier. However, this is not the case. Waterfowl at artificial feeding sites are often found to suffer from poor nutrition. In natural settings, waterfowl seek and feed on a variety of nutritious foods such as aquatic plants, natural grains, and invertebrates. Many of the items commonly used to feed waterfowl (bread, corn, popcorn, etc.) are low in protein and are very poor substitutes for natural foods.

Natural foods are also widely scattered. Ducks and geese are able to find these foods and eat them in relative seclusion. At artificial feeding sites, competition for each scrap or kernel is high. Some ducks and geese (usually the youngest) are unable to compete for handouts.

An extremely sad and alarming sight is a Canada Goose with Angel Wing. Angel Wing is a condition that affects mostly waterfowl, caused by a nutritional deficiency in vitamins and minerals combined with a high level of carbohydrates and sugars. While a number of factors are involved, human-fed bread is one of the probable causes. It causes the carpal joint (or wrist) on the wing to grow awkwardly, leaving the wing unable to sit flush at the bird's side. This affects their ability to fly and the growth of their primary flight feathers — making them look more like sticks than feathers.

Source: <https://naturemuseum.org/2016/05/what-is-angel-wing-syndrome/>

Quite a few Canada Geese with Angel Wing have been seen along the Fox River near the walking and biking trails.



A Canada Goose with Angel Wing.

Photo:

<https://naturemuseum.org/2016/05/what-is-angel-wing-syndrome/>

Canada Goose Names

Common name Canada Goose

Canada: Canada Geese were often seen flying towards Canada and living there. You could now just as easily call it a North American Goose since it is found all over North America and lives just about anywhere.

Goose refers to the family the Canada Goose belongs to.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first citation for *Canada Goose* dates back to 1772.



Scientific name *Branta canadensis*

Branta was a Latin form of Old Norse Brandgás, “burnt,” referring to the dark black-brown charred appearance.

canadensis is a New Latin word meaning “of Canada.”

