



AN ENDANGERED SPECIES SUCCESS STORY

Highlighting a 35-year conservation effort involving state governments, conservation organizations, and private landowners, the Aleutian Canada goose (*Branta canadensis leucoparia*) has fully recovered from near extinction and will be removed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) list of threatened and endangered species.

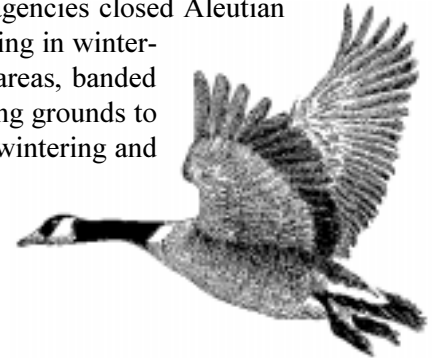
A subspecies of the Canada goose, the Aleutian Canada goose is found only on a few of Alaska's remote, wind-swept Aleutian Islands and in areas of California and Oregon. Aleutian Canada geese numbered only in the hundreds in the mid-1970s. Through unprecedented cooperation with state governments and in partnership with private landowners and organizations, biologists with USFWS were able to slowly bring the bird back. Today, the estimated population has grown to 37,000 and the threat of extinction has passed.

The Aleutian Canada goose, identifiable by a distinctive white neck-band and its small size, nests on islands within the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Biologists trace the origin of the subspecies' decline back as far as 1750 when fur-farmers and trappers began introducing non-native foxes on more than 190 islands within the goose's nesting range in Alaska. The fox introductions hit their peak from 1915 to 1936, when fur demand was high. The foxes preyed heavily upon the birds, which had no natural defenses against land predators on the previously mammal-free islands. Scientists recorded no sightings of Aleutian Canada geese from 1938 until 1962, when Service biologists discovered a remnant population on rugged, remote Buldir Island in the western Aleutians. Scientists believe Buldir was fox-free because its rocky, stormy coast was difficult to approach.

This small subspecies of Canada goose was first listed as endangered in 1967 under Federal laws that predated the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The goose was one of

the first species or subspecies to be protected under this Act. The first accurate count of the birds in 1975 revealed only 790 individuals. In the early 1980s, biologists found small numbers of breeding geese on two other islands.

Since 1967, biologists have worked to eliminate introduced foxes from former nesting islands and to reintroduce geese. The removal of these predators has benefited many other bird species on the islands, including puffins, murre, and auklets. Besides removing foxes, the Service and state wildlife agencies closed Aleutian Canada goose hunting in wintering and migration areas, banded birds on the breeding grounds to identify important wintering and migrations areas, and released families of wild geese caught on Buldir Island on other fox-free islands in the Aleutians.



Canada Goose

Credit: Robert Savannah, USFWS

In California, the Service has worked extensively with local landowners in cooperative partnerships to protect and manage wintering habitat on private land through fee title acquisition, easements and voluntary programs. Important wintering and migration habitat in California and Oregon also has been acquired as national wildlife refuges.

As a direct result of these recovery activities, the population increased to 6,300 birds by 1990, enough to allow the Service to reclassify the subspecies from endangered to threatened. The recovery continued through the 1990s, with new populations firmly established on Agattu, Alaid and Nizki islands in the western Aleutians.

While the species continues to rebound in the western Aleutians, Russian scientists are conducting an ongoing program to reestablish Aleutian Canada geese in the Asian portion of the birds' range. So far, Russian biologists have

released 86 geese on Ekarma Island in the northern Kuril Islands. Japanese scientists have observed several of these birds on the wintering grounds in Japan.

The Service is required under ESA to monitor Aleutian Canada goose populations for at least five years. The Service will pay particularly close attention to the small number of geese that nest in the Semidi Islands and winter on the north coast of Oregon. While the goose will no longer be protected under the provisions of ESA, the subspecies is still protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Other U.S. and U.S. territorial species that have, to date, recovered enough to be removed from listing under the Endangered Species Act, and the dates of their delistings, are as follows: American alligator (1987), American peregrine falcon (1999), Arctic peregrine falcon (1994), brown pelican (Atlantic coast population, 1985), Palau ground dove (1985), Palau fantail flycatcher (1985), Palau owl (1985), and gray whale (1994). In addition, the eastern gray kangaroo (1995), western gray kangaroo (1995), and red kangaroo (1995) have been delisted.

- adapted from USFWS

WORLD TO SHARE BIODIVERSITY DATA

After 5 years of discussions and planning, representatives from 32 countries and intergovernmental organizations completed the planning efforts for a new project to bring data about biological diversity to the desktop of anyone with access to the Internet. The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) will be an interconnected set of databases that will contain information about all 1.8 million species of organisms - from bacteria to whales - that have received scientific names, including access to data on the approximately 3 billion specimens located in the world's natural history collections. GBIF will be an unparalleled resource for scientists, natural resource managers, policymakers and the general public, who will be able to use GBIF to find genetic, taxonomic, geographical and ecological information on the world's species.

Biodiversity is distributed all over the Earth, with the highest concentrations in the tropical regions, especially in developing countries, and in the oceans. In contrast, scientific information about biodiversity is largely concentrated in major centers in developed countries, especially in the scientific collections of the world's natural history museums, herbaria and microorganismal repositories. GBIF will provide access to this treasure-trove of data from anywhere in the world.

The GBIF project will be funded by participating countries and organizations. A small staff will work actively with database developers around the world, and will develop innovative tools for accessing, linking and searching biodiversity databases.

GBIF will be an important tool for protection, management and sustainable use of biological resources worldwide. It will also aid in advancing education and scientific research in a host of areas, including conservation biology, agriculture, and biomedicine; in serving the economic and quality-of-life interests of society; and in providing a basis from which our knowledge of the natural world can grow rapidly and in a manner that avoids duplication of effort and expenditure.

Further information about GBIF can be found at the GBIF web site at <http://www.gbif.org>.

-adapted from GBIF

FUTURE MEETINGS

The **6th Annual Meeting of the Texas Society for Ecological Restoration** will be held 17-19 August 2001 at Heart of the Hills Conference Center in Hunt, Texas. Topics will cover all areas of restoration with a special focus on the following: (1) invasive species—eradicating, controlling, or living with them; (2) the Hill Country/Central Texas region; (3) restoration education; and 4) community initiatives. “Invasive Species and Ecological Restoration” is the theme for this year’s conference. Examples of invasive species are juniper and mesquite (native) and Johnsongrass and KR bluestem (non-native). For more information or to find the most up to date information about the conference, please see the Texas SER website at <http://www.cep.unt.edu/sertex.html> or contact Shirlene Sitton at shirlene@unt.edu or Jan Dickson at TXSER@unt.edu, or telephone (940) 565-4332.

INFORMATION HIGHWAY HI-LITES

Created by a host of organizations (Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Union of Concerned Scientists, US Public Interest Research Group, World Resources Institute, and World Wildlife Fund), **Global Warming: Early Warning Signs** <<http://www.climatehotmap.org/>> seeks to provide evidence of the “fingerprints” and “harbingers” of global warming. A clickable map of the world enables users to take a closer look at geographic regions, at specific ex-

amples of “fingerprints” (e.g., heat waves, sea level rise, melting glaciers, and Arctic and Antarctic warming) and “harbingers” (spreading disease, earlier arrival of spring, range shifts and population declines in plants and animals, bleaching of coral reefs, extreme weather events, and fires). While it is unclear that any specific event may be explained by global warming, the combination of events highlighted at this page provides powerful fodder for further thought.

- from *The Scout Report for Science & Engineering*
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The Natural History Museum (London) provides *Coffee and Biodiversity Conservation in El Salvador* <<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/botany/coffee/projectmain.html>>, highlighting a three-year project funded by the UK Government’s Darwin Initiative. The aim of this particular project is “to promote the conservation of biodiversity by providing the tools, training and information necessary to empower local people to monitor and assess the biodiversity of the forests associated with Shade Coffee farms in El Salvador.” The site’s main sections describe the Coffee and Biodiversity Conservation in El Salvador project, including economics of the project and a training course that offers basic biodiversity assessment skills to Salvadorans. Of interest to ecologists, the site also provides species lists for the trees and Pimplinae wasps of the Shade Forest (giving family, scientific name, and local name). A selection of interesting links (featuring Central American sites) fills out this concise and well-illustrated site.

- from *The Scout Report*

In addition to its tremendous value as a spectacular haven for wildlife, the 1.5 million-acre coastal plain known as the *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge* is now the focus of major debate about oil and gas exploration and development. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) maintains the official homepage of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) <<http://www.r7.fws.gov/nwr/arctic/>>. The ANWR web page supplies background information on the refuge (description, location, maps), wildlife (birds, mammals, fish), habitats, and people. For a brief introduction to the development issue, USFWS provides the document “Potential Impacts of Proposed Oil and Gas Development on the Arctic Refuge’s Coastal Plain: Historical Overview and Issues of Concern” (found under “Oil and Gas Development” in the Refuge Information section).

- from *The Scout Report*

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