



Threatened and Endangered Species

Aleutian Canada goose (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*)

Status

Threatened throughout its range (*Federal Register*, November 21, 1991), formerly endangered (*Federal Register*, March 11, 1967).

Description

The Aleutian Canada goose is one of the smallest subspecies of Canada goose. Adults are slightly larger than a mallard, weighing 1.8 to 2.7 kilograms (4 to 6 pounds). Like all Canada geese, Aleutian Canada geese have a black head and neck with a white cheek patch, brown wings and back, a grayish-brown breast and belly, a white rump patch, and black legs and feet. Aleutian Canada geese are distinguished from other Canada goose subspecies by their small size, short bill, and white ring encircling the base of the neck.

Range and Population Level

Aleutian Canada geese probably bred historically on islands south of the Alaska Peninsula west of Kodiak Island, throughout the Aleutian Islands, and on the Commander and Kuril islands in Russia. They probably wintered from British Columbia to northern Mexico and in Japan. Today, most of the population nests on Buldir Island, but remnant populations also persisted on Chagulak Island in the eastern Aleutians and on Kiliktagik Island in the Semidi Island group. Reintroduced populations now also flourish on Agattu and Nizki-Alaid islands in the western Aleutians. Releases of translocated geese or expansion of remnant populations have resulted in limited nesting on Little Kiska, Amchitka, Amukta, and Anowik (Semidi) islands. Aleutian



Only slightly larger than a mallard duck, the Aleutian Canada goose is one of the smallest subspecies of Canada goose. It nests only on islands in the North Pacific Ocean. USFWS photo by Rob Lowe

Canada geese breeding in the Aleutian Islands winter primarily in the Central Valley of California, and geese breeding in the Semidi Islands winter near Pacific City, Oregon. Due to the recovery program, the population of Aleutian Canada geese has increased from about 800 birds in the mid-1970's to more than 32,000 birds in 1999.

Habitat and Habits

Aleutian Canada geese nest on treeless islands in areas densely vegetated by grasses, sedges, and ferns. Nest sites usually are found on steep, grassy hillsides near the seacoast. Molting habitat is generally located farther inland than nesting sites. During migration and on

wintering grounds, the geese frequent agricultural lands such as pastures and grainfields, and roost at night on inland lakes and coastal islands.

Reasons for Current Status

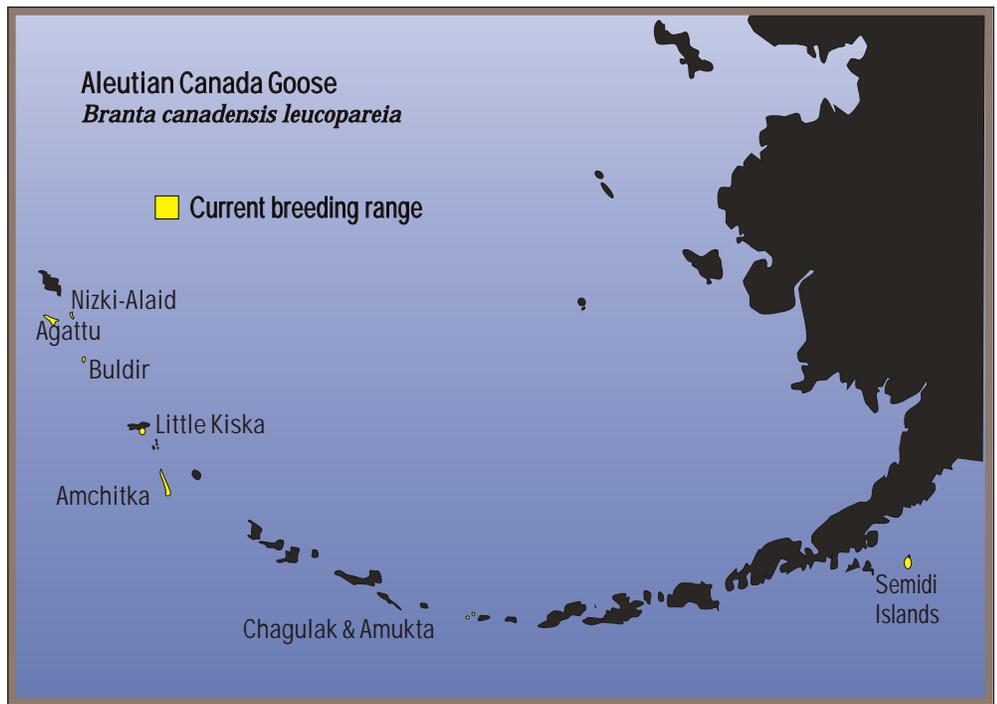
The principal cause of the decline of the Aleutian Canada goose was predation by arctic fox (*Alopex lagopus*). Foxes were introduced to many North Pacific islands for fur farming, principally between 1915 and 1939, but dating back as early as the 1750's. This introduced predator decimated populations of many species of native birds on the islands. Geese were particularly susceptible to predation not only during egg and chick stages, but also as molting

adults became flightless. In addition, suitable wintering habitat is disappearing due to urbanization and changing agricultural practices, particularly in the Central Valley of California.

Management and Protection

All known breeding locations of the Aleutian Canada goose are protected within the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Years of effort have been devoted to removing introduced arctic foxes from former nesting islands and reintroducing Aleutian Canada geese. Remnant breeding populations have increased, and reestablished populations now add to the recovery of this subspecies. Additional goose translocations are occurring, including a project to reestablish Aleutian Canada geese from Buldir to former nesting islands in Russia.

Winter habitat for Aleutian Canada geese receives varying levels of protection. Many important wintering areas and migration stops are on private lands, but Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge was recently established in Oregon to protect important wintering habitat. In California, San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge provides winter habitat for Aleutian Canada geese. Avian cholera is a chronic low-level problem on these wintering grounds, but the losses incurred due to this disease do not have population-level effects. Sport hunting is closed for all Canada geese in areas heavily used by the Aleutian Canada geese. In



The breeding range of Aleutian Canada geese is restricted to islands in the North Pacific Ocean.

Alaska, hunting of Canada geese west of Unimak Pass has been closed since 1973.

Initially listed as an endangered species in 1967, the Aleutian Canada goose was downlisted to "threatened" in 1991 due to successful recovery efforts and increasing population numbers. Because of continuing

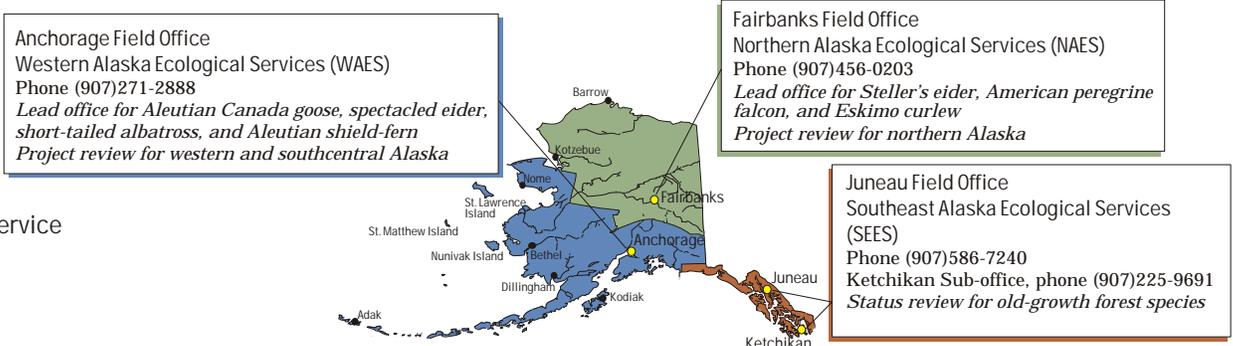
progress in the recovery of this subspecies, it may soon no longer need Endangered Species Act protection.

References

Bailey, E.P. 1993. Introduction of Foxes to Alaskan Islands - History, Effects on Avifauna, and Eradication. U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Resource publication 193, Washington, D.C. 54 pp.

Byrd, G.V. 1998. Current breeding status of the Aleutian Canada goose, a recovering endangered species. *In press*. Biology and Management of Canada Geese, Proceedings of the International Canada Goose Symposium, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For more information on this and other threatened and endangered species, contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Field Office near you.



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