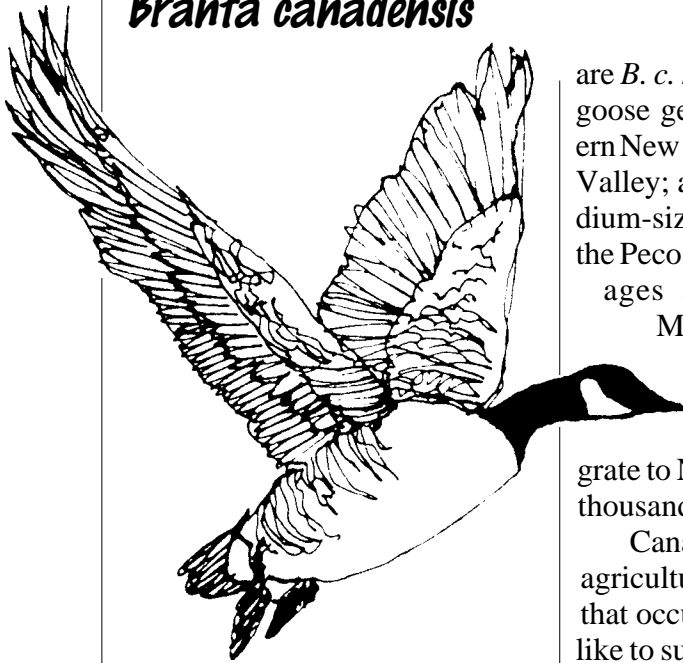




WILDLIFE NOTES

Canada goose

Branta canadensis



The Canada goose is not a "Canadian" goose, as it is sometimes called by people who don't know their name. The species includes several races varying in weight from three to more than 12 pounds. All have black heads and necks, white cheeks, similar habitats, and voices.

Numerous and popular, Canada geese are often called "honkers." They are among the most easily identified of all waterfowl, as the Canada's resonating honk, drab-colored body, and V flock formation are familiar to most people.

In New Mexico, the Canada goose resides primarily north and southward in the Rio Grande and Pecos valleys, but can be found statewide. Among the more well-known subspecies in New Mexico

are *B. c. moffitti* – the larger goose generally seen in western New Mexico and the Rio Grande Valley; and *B. c. parvipes*, the medium-size Canada goose found in the Pecos and Canadian river drainages and the plains of New Mexico. The *B. c. hutchinsii* is the smaller of the subspecies. Canada geese number that nest in or migrate to New Mexico number in the thousands.

Canada geese can be found in agricultural fields and in marshes that occur in desert streams. They like to sun on bare shorelines, or on the edge of iced streams. This goose is very common around Farmington's parks, athletic fields, and golf courses. Many populations of geese have, in fact, developed such a liking for urban environments that they have become a nuisance in cities in Minnesota, Michigan, Colorado and other places.

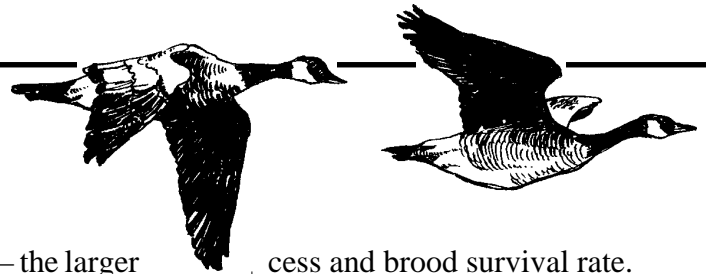
The species has experienced a phenomenal population growth since the 1940s and is becoming a more frequent sight across its broad North American range. The main reasons for the increase in Canada geese, biologists say, is their ready response to refuges on their key migration routes, combined with carefully managed harvest rates and their ability to thrive on agricultural products. In addition, giant Canadas have a naturally high nesting suc-

cess and brood survival rate.

The sexes of the Canada goose are identical. This handsome goose mates for life, at about two to three years old. They breed from March to July, with their peak nesting season the first week of April, and may nest in dense marshes, on islands, or tops of muskrat houses, and on elevated platforms. They may also nest on haystacks, in abandoned heron nests, on dikes, and ditch banks. A clutch is generally four to seven eggs, and incubation is about 25 to 30 days.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has encouraged nesting of Canada geese by constructing nest platforms or boxes for the geese to use, primarily in the San Juan River area and the Bernardo and La Joya Waterfowl Management Areas, south of Belen.

The Canada goose forages on the ground in water for its food, which consists of grain, stems, spikerush, and rootstocks. They will also feed on mowed lawns.



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