

Red-Breasted Goose

Scientific Name: *Branta ruficollis*

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae



The Red-breasted Goose is the smallest of the northern geese and the most boldly patterned. The genus name, *Branta* is from the Anglo-Saxon *brennan*, 'to burn' and refers to the reddish-brown color. The species name *ruficollis* is from the Latin *rufus*, 'red' and *collus*, 'the neck.' The coloring of the upper and lower plumage shows a combination of black and white. In particular, there is a stripe or band on the sides and a conspicuous under-tail and a white mark on the cheeks. The neck and breast are rich reddish brown and are separated from the black under-parts by a white stripe. The small delicate bill, legs and feet are black. Sexes look alike, but immature birds have a paler color. The length is 20 to 22 inches and the weight is about 3.5 pounds. The wingspan is 48 inches.

Range

Northern Asia and Eastern Europe

Habitat

Their habitat includes coastal tundra and grassy steppes

Gestation

Incubation: about 25 days

Litter

Clutch size: 3-8 eggs

Behavior

This species often flocks with white-fronted geese in the winter when it feeds on spilled grain and sprouting wheat shoots. While migrating it will eat the bulbs of wild garlic. These winter flocks are very active in feeding, and quarrels are frequent. In the summer it grazes. The bird shows two distinct types of "threat" against perceived enemies: 1) a lateral threat in which the head is erect and the neck feathers are elongated and vibrated vigorously, and 2) a more extreme threat involving a forward display during which the head and neck are pointed toward the opponent and held close to the ground while the head is shaken occasionally in a rotary manner.

Reproduction

These geese breed between their third and fifth years in captivity. They arrive on the Siberian breeding grounds in flocks of 3 to 15 birds, usually by mid-June. The breeding habitat is situated in grassy steppes along rivers and in the coastal tundra. The nest is made in a shallow hollow on the ground and is lined with plant matter and down. The single clutch each year is incubated solely by the female while the male acts as sentry near the nest. He also feeds her during this period. Fledging takes 6 weeks. Many nests are built near the nests of raptors such as peregrine falcons and rough-legged buzzards.

Wild Diet

Mainly grasses and grain