

Aleutian Goose (Aleutian)

Description

- Broad white neck ring around the lower neck (Figures 22 and 23). Cheek patches separated by black feathers. Breast dark with a purplish cast.
- If collared, the collar is blue or grey.
- Culmen: length between 32-38 mm.
- Head appears large and “blocky” compared to other geese.



Figure 22: Aleutian goose.



Figure 23: Aleutian goose showing broad white neck ring and purplish breast color.



Figure 24: Aleutian goose (top left) with lesser Canada geese.

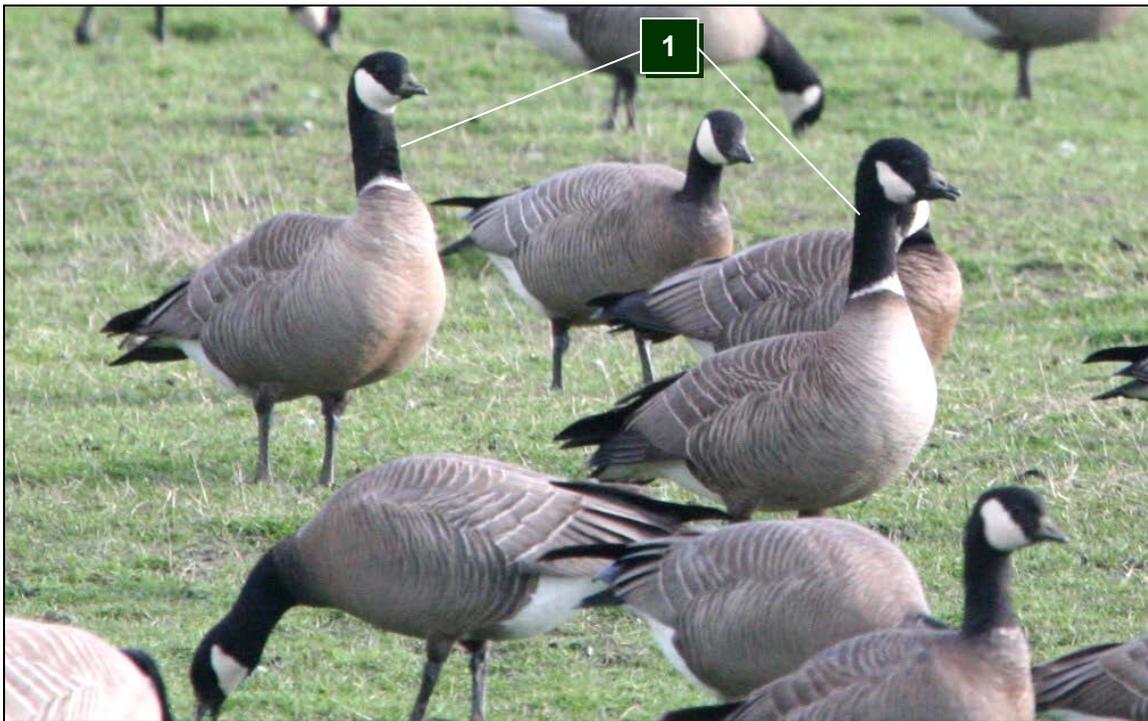


Figure 25: Aleutian geese (1); notice significant white neck rings and slightly larger size and lighter color than cackling goose in background.



Figure 26: Aleutian geese in flight.



Figure 27: Aleutian geese in flight; notice white neck ring apparent on all birds.

Distribution

Aleutian geese nest in the Aleutians Islands of Alaska and primarily migrate along the Oregon Coast to wintering grounds in California (Figure 28). There is an extremely small breeding segment established on the Semidi Islands in the Gulf of Alaska, which winter mainly in Tillamook County, Oregon.



Figure 28: Nesting areas and migration route for Aleutian geese.

Behavior

Aleutian geese are rarely found in the Willamette Valley and lower Columbia River. In Oregon and Washington, they are more likely to be found along the coast. If present, they are commonly found in mixed flocks with cackling and Taverner's geese.

Management

Aleutian geese were put on the endangered species list in 1967 because of extremely low population numbers. At the time of federal threatened and endangered species delisting, their population had reached a sustainable level of 60,000 to 70,000. The current population level is above 115,000. Hunting was allowed in 2005-2006 in Oregon for the first time in more than 50 years.

Management efforts have primarily concentrated on eliminating introduced foxes from the islands in the Aleutians where Aleutian geese breed and nest. Geese were also relocated to islands with smaller bald eagle populations to reduce predation.

Because of the rapid expansion of this population and increasing depredation issues, Oregon and California are evaluating new harvest strategies that include late season hunting. Beginning in 2006, Oregon and California received approval for late season hunting in February and early March. In the future, potential new harvest strategies will likely occur outside the Permit Zone as Aleutians are not common.

Tillamook County, Oregon, which was previously treated as a closed area of the permit zone, was recently opened to permit goose hunting. Coastal areas of this county may hold large numbers of migrating and wintering Aleutian geese.

Future

The recovery of the Aleutian goose is a success story of the federal Threatened and Endangered Species Act. Their population is over 115,000 geese and this number is expected to continue increasing. This growth has placed new demands on wintering and migration habitat, which has led to increasing incidences of agricultural depredation. Future management of the Aleutian population will continue to be complex as managers try to balance the needs of the growing population with tolerable levels of agricultural depredation.