

## *Western Canada Goose (Western, Honker or Great Basin)*

### **Description**

- Generally lighter in color than other Canada and cackling subspecies. White neck ring not common.
- If collared, the collar color is black or white; colored leg bands can be white or green.
- Culmen length >50 mm.
- Wing beat is usually slow compared to other goose species; neck is long in relation to body length.
- Largest of the geese in the permit zone.



Figure 81: Western Canada goose.



Figure 82: Western Canada geese are light in color.



*Figure 83: Western Canada geese.*



*Figure 84: Western Canada geese in flight; notice long necks and whitish breast.*



Figure 85: Western Canada geese; notice silver white breast with long neck and long culmen (bill).



Figure 86: Western Canada geese silhouetted in flight; note long neck and broad wings.



*Figure 87: Western Canada geese in flight; notice light color, broad wings and long neck.*



*Figure 88: Western Canada geese in flight; notice sharp distinction between neck and breast color.*



*Figure 89: Western Canada goose feeding.*



*Figure 90: Western Canada goose; notice bright silver color.*



*Figure 91: Group of western Canada geese.*



Figure 92: Western Canada geese in flight; notice long necks.



Figure 93: Western Canada goose; notice light color.



Figure 94: Group of western Canada geese; notice color differences between individuals.



*Figure 95: Group of western Canada geese in flight.*

## Distribution

Western Canada geese are the only Canada goose subspecies that nest in Oregon and Washington. Westerns also migrate to the region from several other states and provinces (Figure 96).



*Figure 96: General range of western Canada geese.*

## History

Westerns are the only native breeding geese in Oregon and Washington. These geese were not originally found in western Oregon and Washington, but spread from east of the Cascades and were introduced by private aviculturists and wildlife managers. They are very common throughout most western states.

## Behavior

Western Canada geese are generally unwary and tend to occur in groups separate from other subspecies. They adapt well to habitat changes and have been especially responsive to urbanization; they are found on golf courses, in industrial parks, and around airports or any place with large expanses of lawn or fields. Westerns are found near natural and artificial lakes and ponds. As such, they have become a nuisance around the rye grass fields and golf courses in the Willamette Valley and along the lower Columbia River as well as in many parks and lakes within urban boundaries.

## Management

The number of westerns in the Willamette Valley and lower Columbia River increased substantially in the recent past. In response, managers have sought to reduce the population through increased hunting opportunity, such as special September Canada goose seasons. This strategy has resulted in a decrease in western Canada goose numbers in recent years. It is predicted that, with increasing urbanization, westerns will continue to be a management challenge in this area.

A small breeding group of dark breasted Canada geese occurs in the lower Columbia River areas of Oregon and Washington, and these geese have been the focus of increased banding and management efforts over the past ten years. Although they have measurements ranging from dusky to westerns, this group is considered to be western Canada geese, and many have been marked with white neck collars to distinguish them from other dark-breasted Canada geese during the hunting season.