

## 4. OTHER GOOSE SPECIES IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY AND LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER

### *Greater White-Fronted Goose*

#### **Description**

- High-pitched call, sounds like a laugh or yodel.
- Pink or orange bill.
- Adults have black bars on breast and belly and white “front” behind bill.
- About the size of a Taverner’s or lesser.



Figure 97: White-fronted goose (center) with lesser Canada geese.



Figure 98: White-fronted geese (three in foreground) and cackling geese.



Figure 99: White-fronted geese.





Figure 100: White-fronted geese; adults have black markings on belly; juveniles lack marks.



Figure 101: White-fronted geese in flight; they are similar to lesser Canada geese in size.



*Figure 102: Juvenile white-fronted goose (left) with adult white-fronts.*



*Figure 103: Adult white-fronted geese in flight.*

## History

Populations of greater white-fronted geese, commonly known as specs or speckle bellies, found in the Pacific Flyway have fluctuated for the past several decades. Currently, the Pacific population is increasing and is above flyway management objectives. Most white-fronted geese winter in the Central Valley of California, but white-fronts are observed and harvested in the permit zone every year. Currently, they are not common in our region, but appear to be increasing. These birds breed in Alaska and are also taken by subsistence hunters.

## Behavior

White-fronted geese tend to prefer marsh/wetland areas for foraging over fields, but they can be found in both habitats. They are commonly found with other species of geese. White-fronted geese roost on water and often go out to feed during the day, a behavior similar to that of many goose subspecies.

## Future

The Pacific population of greater white-fronted geese is increasing in population due to favorable conditions in nesting areas. White-fronts are expected to continue increasing and may possibly become more numerous in the Willamette Valley and lower Columbia River, an area where they didn't historically winter.

## *Lesser Snow Goose*

### **Description**

- Adult lesser snow geese have white body with black wing tips. Juveniles are grayer in appearance with black wing tips.
- Adults have pink bills, legs, and feet and juveniles have gray-pink bills, legs and feet
- Lesser snow geese are about the size of a Taverner's or lesser.

### **Behavior**

Lesser snow Geese are one of the wariest birds. They tend to fly high and prefer to land with large flocks of geese already on the ground. Lesser snow geese are uncommon in the Willamette Valley and along the lower Columbia River, where they are usually found as singles within flocks of Canada goose subspecies. However, there is a wintering flock of up to several thousand geese in the lower Columbia River area near Sauvie Island, Oregon and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Washington in most years.

### **Management**

Most lesser snow geese present in the permit zone are from the Wrangel Island, Russia nesting population. Historically, this population has experienced large swings in numbers and currently numbers around 132,000, which is above the flyway management objective. Most of this population now winters in the Skagit area of Washington whereas historically most wintered in the Central Valley of California.

### **Future**

Wintering populations of lesser snow geese along the lower Columbia River have remained fairly constant for many years. It is not certain if more birds will winter in this region in the future or the current wintering grounds in Washington and California will be maintained. Unlike other white goose populations in North America, most Pacific white goose populations are not over-abundant but are at healthy levels.





Figure 104: Group of lesser snow geese.



Figure 105: Group of lesser snow geese in flight.



Figure 106: Adult and juvenile lesser snow geese; lesser snow geese are about the size of lesser Canada geese.