Current Goose Population Status

Current population statuses of goose populations of interest to Oregon's Goose Task Force. Information taken directly from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's 2009 Waterfowl Population Status report,
http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/NewReportsPublications/PopulationStatus/Waterfowl/StatusReport2009_Final.pdf

Pacific Population Canada Geese

These large Canada geese nest and winter west of the Rocky Mountains from northern Alberta and British Columbia south through the Pacific Northwest to California. The total of Pacific Population goose indices in 2009 was 127,000, 47% lower than last year. Most Pacific Population geese are surveyed in Alberta (WBPHS strata 76-77) where 68,100 (±28,500) were estimated in 2009, 63% fewer than the unusually high estimate in 2008 (P = 0.039), and similar to other recent surveys. Indices of statewide nesting effort in Washington, California, and Nevada increased from 2008 levels, and decreased slightly in Oregon. Habitat conditions varied throughout Pacific Population range in 2009 but generally wetland conditions were improved from 2008 with the exception of southwest Idaho and western Washington. In general, gosling production and the 2009 fall flight are expected to be near average.

Dusky Canada Geese

These mid-sized Canada geese predominantly nest on the Copper River Delta of south-eastern Alaska, and winter principally in the Willamette and Lower Columbia River Valleys of Oregon and Washington. The official population index of Dusky Canada Geese was changed from a wintering mark-resight method to a direct count of geese on Dusky Canada Geese breeding areas in 2007. The 2009 spring population estimate was 6,700 Dusky Canada Geese, 26% below 2008, and the lowest on record for this population since 1986, when comparable surveys were initiated (Figure 14.2). These estimates have decreased an average of 3% during 2000-2009 (P = 0.222). Spring snowmelt on the Copper River Delta breeding area was slightly delayed in 2009 due to heavy winter snowfall, and nesting phenology was a few days later than average. A moderately strong run of spawning eulachon (a common prey fish of eagles) contributed to high nest success and low eagle predation on dusky geese this year. Despite the low population level in 2009, gosling production is expected to be near average.

14.2: Dusky Canada Geese

Cackling Canada Geese

Cackling Canada geese nest on the Yukon- Kuskokwim Delta (YKD) of western Alaska. They primarily winter in the Willamette and Lower Columbia River Valleys of Oregon and Washington. Since 1999, the primary index of this population has been an estimate of the fall population derived from the previous spring counts of adults on the YKD. The fall estimate for 2009 is 160,600 geese, 17% lower than that of 2008. These estimates have increased an average of 1% per year since 2000 (P = 0.521; Figure 15). Indices of total cackling geese in the YKD coastal zone in 2009 decreased about 20% from last year but indicated pair numbers remained near the record high level of 2008. The timing of spring snowmelt on the YKD was near average and the median hatch date of cackling geese was one day earlier than the long-term average. Yukon Delta nesting surveys conducted during 2009 indicated clutch sizes were slightly below average, fox predation was reduced from the levels of recent years, and nest success was high. Overall, good production and a fall fight similar to that of last year are expected.

Figure 15: Estimated numbers of cacklin Canada geese (fall geese).

Lesser and Taverner's Canada Geese

These populations nest throughout Alaska and winter in Washington, Oregon, and California. Taverner's geese are more strongly associated with tundra areas of the North Slope and western Alaska, while lesser Canada geese tend to nest in Alaska's interior. However, these geese mix with other Canada geese throughout the year and reliable estimates of separate populations are not presently available. The 2009 estimate of Canada geese within WBPHS strata predominantly occupied by these subspecies (strata 1-6, 8, 10-12) was 68,000, 26% lower than the 2008 estimate (P = 0.339). These estimates have declined an average of 3% per year since 2000 (P = 0.239). Timing of spring break-up and flooding extent in Alaska's interior was variable in 2009. In general, above-average goose production was reported in eastern interior areas, but flooding was reported to have reduced nest success and gosling production in western areas. Overall, production of lesser Canada geese in the interior is expected to be near average. Spring phenology was nearly a week early on the North Slope, and near average on the Yukon Delta. Production of Taverner's geese is expected to be better than average on the Yukon Delta and the North Slope.

Aleutian Canada Geese

The Aleutian Canada goose was listed as endangered in 1967 (the population numbered approximately 800 birds in 1974) and was de-listed in 2001. These geese now nest primarily on the Aleutian Islands, although historically they nested from near Kodiak Island, Alaska to the Kuril Islands in Asia. They now winter along the Pacific Coast to central California. Aleutian population estimates since 1996 are based on analysis of observations of neck-banded geese in California. The preliminary population estimate during the winter of 2008-2009 was 79,500 (±26,100), 29% lower than the revised 2008 estimate (P = 0.034; Figure 16). These estimates have increased by an average of 10% per year during the last 10 winters (P = 0.050). Biologists working on Buldir Island reported that nesting phenology in 2009 was approximately three days earlier than average, the mean clutch size of 3.4 eggs was lower than the previous average (4.1), and that a strong nesting effort was observed. A fall flight similar to that of last year is expected.

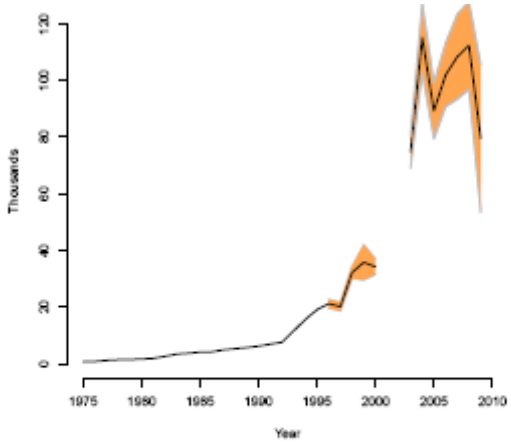

Figure 16: Estimated numbers of Aleutian Canada geese (winter geese, with 95% confidence intervals).

Western Arctic/Wrangel Island Population Lesser Snow Geese

Most of the snow geese in the Pacific Flyway originate from nesting colonies in the western and central Arctic (WA: Banks Island, the Anderson and Mackenzie River Deltas, and the western Queen Maud Gulf region) or Wrangel Island (WI), located off the northern coast of Russia. The WA segment of the population winters in central and southern California, New Mexico, and Mexico; the WI segment winters in the Puget Sound area of Washington and in northern and central California. In winter, WA and WI segments commingle with light geese from other populations in California, complicating surveys. The fall 2008 estimate of WAWI snow geese was 957,400, 11% lower than the previous year's record-high count (Figure 19.1). Fall estimates increased 7% per year during 1999-2008 (P = 0.003). Reports indicate that spring conditions and nesting phenology on Banks Island was near average in 2009. Snow goose nesting efforts were below average at Kendall Island, and were extremely poor at Anderson River colonies. Nesting conditions at Wrangel Island's Tundra River colony were reported as excellent and one of the earliest nesting seasons on record. Preliminary estimates included a spring population of 135,000-140,000 adults, with 50,000-60,000 nesting pairs. Estimates of the Wrangel Island spring population have increased an average of 4% per year since 2000 (P < 0.001). Biologists expected excellent production from Wrangel Island with estimated nest success estimated at 80% and a mean clutch size of 4.1 eggs. A larger-than-average fall flight is expected in 2009.

19.1: Western Arctic/Wrangel Island Population

Pacific Population White-fronted Geese

These geese primarily nest on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (YKD) of Alaska and winter in the Central Valley of California. The index for this population was a fall estimate from 1979-1998. Since 1999, the index has been a fall population estimate derived from spring surveys of adults on the YKD and Bristol Bay. The 2009 fall estimate is 536,700, 14% lower than the 2008 record-high estimate (Figure 20). These estimates have increased an average of 6% per year since 2000 (P = 0.002). The timing of spring snowmelt on the YKD was near average and the median hatch of white-fronted geese was two days later than the long-term average. Yukon Delta nesting surveys conducted during 2009 indicated clutch sizes were near average, fox predation was reduced from the levels of recent years, and nest success was better than average. Good production and a fall flight similar to that of 2008 are expected.

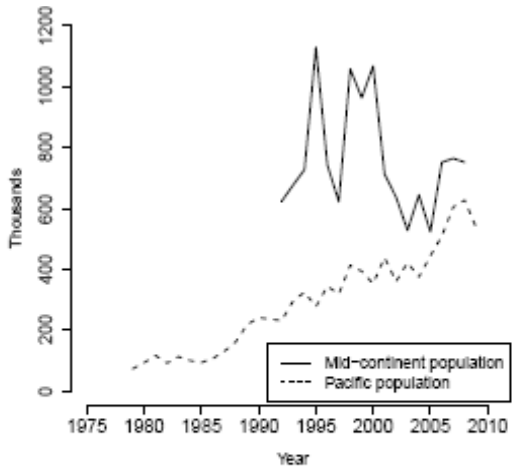

Figure 20: Estimated numbers of Mid-continen Population and Pacific Population white-fronte geese (fall geese).