Canada goose

Branta canadensis

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae

Features

The Canada goose is 25 to 43 inches long. Both sexes are similar in appearance. Its heavy, brown body has a long, black neck and a black head. There is a white patch on each side of the head. The chest is light gray.

Natural History

The Canada goose lives on and around lakes, ponds, marshes, or fields. It commonly is found in urban areas. This bird eats grasses, seeds, corn, wheat, and aquatic plants. It is known for its “V” formation flight pattern and its call of “ka-ronk” or “ka-lunk.” Spring migration may start as early as January. Nesting occurs from March through June. The nest is a depression in the ground lined with straw, grasses, and down feathers. One to 12 tan eggs are laid. Fall migration begins in September, but many Canada geese overwinter where open water is available. The Canada goose disappeared as a nesting species in Iowa around 1900 when its populations declined rapidly because of habitat loss and excessive hunting. The Iowa Conservation Commission began a restocking program in 1964 and Canada goose nesting populations became established. By 1990 it was nesting in nearly every county in the state.

Habitats

interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

Year round: statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.