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Pacific Flyway Management Plan

Vancouver Canada Goose
Branta Canadensis fulva

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Objectives	2
III.	Status	3
IV.	Problems	4
V.	Management Procedures	5
	Literature Cited	6

I. Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidelines for cooperative management of the Vancouver Canada Geese. This goose largely occupies wilderness habitat year around and may be limited by natural factors. For this reason there is a dearth of information on it. Taxonomists are not unanimous in recognizing it as a valid subspecies (Palmer 1976) (Van Horn et al 1979). For purposes of this plan we accept the classification of Delacour (1954) because *B.C. fulva* can practically be separated from *B.C. occidentalis*, the dusky Canada goose which appears to be restricted to a very well defined and limited geographical range quite distinct from the Vancouver range. From a management point of view the relatively non migratory geese of Southeast Alaska and northern British Columbia and the highly migratory geese of the Copper River Delta which winter in the Willamette Valley of Oregon will have to be dealt with separately no matter how the taxonomic problem is resolved.

Because of the lack of information, primary management effort may be the acquisition of basic knowledge.

II. Objectives

- A. The primary objective of this plan is to maintain the present population of Vancouver geese throughout its present range.
- B. A secondary objective is to determine if this race did at one time occupy habitats to Puget Sound and if so what may have caused its decline south of its present range.
- C. A third objective to learn what limits this race from occupying similar habitat west of its present range.
- D. A final objective is to determine if it is feasible or practical to enhance the value of this race to man by taking some action to extend its present range south or west.

III. Status

- A. Bellrose (1976) suggests there are 80,000 Vancouver Canada Geese in Southeast Alaska and an additional 7,000 on Queen Charlotte Island and Vancouver Island British Columbia. Four hundred and thirteen recoveries from birds banded near the north end of their range showed 84% recovery in Alaska, 3% from British Columbia, 1% from Washington and 12% from Oregon (Ratti and Timm 1979). Ratti and Timm (79) make a good case that less than 2% of the population actually migrate as far as Oregon and the band recovery rate there is inflated by heavy hunting pressure not encountered elsewhere by these birds. The assumption is that the Vancouver Goose is largely non migratory.
- B. The habitat of the Vancouver Canada Goose is northern rain forest and associated estuarine marshes, an area not adapted to extensive agriculture or urbanization. Clear cut logging is extensive particularly in southern portions of the range and there has been some disturbance of estuarine habitats where the birds spend most of their life, however, habitat alteration does not appear to have been extensive enough in this remote land to limit populations. Habitat pollution is likewise very limited.
- C. Hunting through the fall months is allowed by the human population is small and the goose is wary leading to the conclusion that hunting is not a limiting factor. The opportunity for illegal hunting likewise is very limited.

IV. Problems

- A. It is not clear that the Vancouver Goose has any substantial problems with man. There are some interesting questions about why the bird's range is limited where suitable similar habitat appears to be available south through Puget Sound at least and west to the Kenai Peninsula, lower Cook Inlet and Kodiak Island.

- B. Potential problems that might have to be dealt with in the future are clear cut logging in the nesting habitat, and destruction of estuarine habitats essential for wintering. Introduction of other races of Canada Geese has occurred in British Columbia but whether this is a potential problem is not clear.

V. Management Procedures

As good management must be predicated on sound basic, biological information, the most obvious management procedure for this wilderness goose population is to encourage the amassing of that information.

- A. Basic life history and annual cycle studies are needed. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game and U.S. Forest Service have begun such studies on the Admiralty Island National Monument in Southeast Alaska. This and similar studies elsewhere should be encouraged.
- B. On the basis of scanty information the most logical limiting factor for this goose appears to be the extent and quality of winter habitat. The extent of wintering habitats and present carrying capacity should be documented. This would be expensive and time consuming in the rigorous winter climate and short days of this northern region. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has the capability of working on this in Southeast Alaska and should be encouraged to make a start. The winter habitats in B.C. should also be catalogued. A good knowledge of presently utilized winter habitats may very well shed some light on why the range is limited and whether there is any potential to extend it.
- C. A determination needs to be made as to whether there are any remnant populations of this goose in Puget Sound and whether they were more widely scattered there in the past. Likewise in Northern British Columbia any information on possible former distribution is needed to determine whether this largely non migratory bird was eliminated from any portions of its former range.
- D. A determination needs to be made as to whether this relatively sedentary goose with marine habits has any potential for introduction or reintroduction into unoccupied habitats of the north coastal rain forest. Likewise a determination needs to be made regarding the advisability of establishing or maintaining populations of other Canada Geese within this coastal fringe as has been done in British Columbia.

Literature Cited

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cc

James G. Bartonek
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
500 N.E. Multnomah St. Suite 1692
Portland, Oregon 97232

Jeff Hughes
U.S. Forest Service
Box 309, Petersburg, Alaska 99833

Bob Jeffries
Washington Dept. of Game
1100 East College Way, Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

Nate Johnson
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
210 Ferry Way, Juneau, AK 99801

Gary Kaiser
Canadian Wildlife Service
Box 340, Delta, British Columbia V4K 3Y3, Canada

Skip Ladd
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Migratory Birds
1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503

Rick McElvey
Canadian Wildlife Service
Box 340, Delta, British Columbia V4K 3Y3, Canada

Bill Munro
British Columbia Fish & Wildlife Branch
300-1019 Wharf St., Victoria, British Columbia V8W 2Z1, Canada

Sig Olson
U.S. Forest Service
Box 1628, Juneau, AK 99801

Tom Sterling
Ducks Unlimited (Canada)
2-345 Victoria St., Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada

Dan Timm
Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99502

