

## Canada Goose

During fall and winter Prescott hosts migrating Canada geese, normally spotted on our beautiful lakes, occasionally in grassy backyards, park lawns or farm fields.



During migration long V-formations may be seen, however more geese are foregoing travel, because increased urban development is creating more parks and lawns that attract this species. They are also often heard flying, by day or night, with their honking calls that distinguish them from other species of geese or swans.

Canada geese are large water birds with long black necks, brown backs, tan chests, distinctive white cheeks and chin straps, and wide, flat bills. They can measure from 30 to 44 inches in length, have wingspans exceeding five feet, and weigh up to 20 pounds.

They feed by dabbling in the water or grazing at fields and large lawns. In spring and summer, they feed on grasses and sedges, including skunk cabbage leaves, and during fall and winter they rely on berries and seeds, specially enjoying blueberries.

The female constructs the family nest on ground in an elevated area, near water and with unobstructed views. The large cup-shaped nest receives a layer of her personal down and body feathers after the second egg is laid, and she does all incubation while her mate stands guard.

There is one brood per season consisting of two to eight cream-colored eggs, slightly larger than two by three inches. Incubation is within 28 days, with total nesting time as long as 50 days. Born with yellow down and eyes open, the young leave the nest in a couple of days, able to walk, swim, feed and dive, and prior to leaving feed on their yolk sacs.

The young often remain with their parents for their first year, and as summer fades the families become more social, congregating in large flocks as food becomes more scarce and migration time approaches.

Their total North American population in 2015 was between 4.2 million and over 5.6 million, and although 2.6 million are harvested by hunters each year, the species is not considered threatened.