

Canada Goose

Michigan Canada Goose

[Graphic: Canada Goose]

[Graphic: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Logo]

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Species: *Branta canadensis* ANATIDAE Family OR Class Aves

Life span: 12 years on average in the wild.

Home Range: The home range size decreases as the amount of geese in the population increases. Geese that have become residents of urban or suburban areas have smaller home ranges than birds that are migratory.

Habitat: Open, grassy habitats near water including: ponds, marshes, rivers, or coastlines.

Clutch size: 2-10

Vocalizations: They will hiss when threatened, but are best known for their honking sound.

Appearance: A black head and neck, a brown back, light tan to cream breast, and a white chinstrap.

Size: 4 - 5.6 ft wingspan. Larger than a mallard and smaller than a mute swan.

[Graphic: Size comparison outlines of Mute Swan, Canada Goose, and Mallard.]

[Graphic: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Logo.]

Living with Canada Geese

Canada geese have experienced population growth in areas throughout North America, including Michigan. This trend is due in part to the success of wildlife management programs and the adaptability of these magnificent birds. Canada geese nest in every Michigan county, but are most common in the southern third of the state.

People can see and hear Canada geese almost all year round. Canada geese usually nest in March and April. During the summer months, Canada geese often find refuge on lakes and golf course ponds, feeding on the lush lawns, while experiencing their annual wing molt (loss of flight feathers). Geese can be found in large agricultural fields in fall and winter. These areas provide high energy foods, allowing some geese to stay in Michigan throughout the winter.

Urban and suburban developments with manicured lawns, abundant water bodies, and refuge offer all the resources that geese need to thrive. Geese are especially attracted to lawns that are heavily fertilized, watered, and mowed. Geese are herbivores and are important in their ecosystem as they distribute seeds from the various plants they consume. Canada geese prefer grass shoots, aquatic vegetation, seed heads, birdseed and various grains, which accompany human development.

Artificial feeding is not necessary for their survival and can be harmful to their health. If environmental conditions prevent food from being obtained, Canada geese can go up to 30 days without food. Artificial feeding can create a resident population which does not migrate, and these geese can become a nuisance.

During the spring and summer nesting season, Canada geese become very protective of their nests and hatchlings. For your safety, be aware of your surroundings when visiting parks and areas near water. Do not disturb the geese or get too close to their nests or young.

Canada geese are very adaptable creatures and are capable of living close to humans. There are simple ways to be goose SMART. Just remember ...

- S-Safe to enjoy from a distance.
- M-Make loud noises to scare them away.
- A-Avoid intentionally feeding geese.
- R-Repel geese by putting up a fence or wire.
- T-Trim the grass less often, allowing it to grow taller near the water.

Preventing Conflicts with Geese at Home

[Graphic: Grass.] Make your yard less attractive to geese by allowing the grass to grow long. Don't fertilize or water it.

[Graphic: Person with arms raised.] Use scare tactics to frighten geese away.

[Graphic: Feather.] In June and July, Canada geese are molting and unable to fly. Construct a temporary barrier between your yard and the water to keep flightless geese out.

[Graphic: Bread slice.] Do not feed Canada geese. Artificial feeding can habituate them and harm their digestive system. Bread products are not beneficial to waterfowl survival.

[Graphic: Goose followed by goseling.] Be aware of your surroundings when visiting parks and areas near water. Canada geese are protective of their nests and hatchlings. Do not disturb them or get too close.

Know the Laws

Canada goose hunting seasons are available throughout the state. Hunting is an effective and economical tool to control goose populations. Michigan has special goose hunting seasons established in cooperation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in early September, January and February to target resident geese. Season dates and bag limits can be found in the current Waterfowl Hunting Digest, found online at Michigan.gov/DNRDigests.

Bird nests and the eggs they may contain are protected under federal law. It is illegal to touch, move, or possess any part of the nest or eggs without the proper permit.

In many urban areas, hunting may not be allowed for certain reasons. In this case, specially permitted nuisance control companies can be hired to assist landowners with goose control programs. A list of companies is available at Michigan.gov/Wildlife.

Contact the USDA Wildlife Services for removal assistance including nest destruction and relocation permits. Local wildlife biologists can be contacted if there is an aggressive Canada goose causing a public safety risk, or an inappropriate nest in your area. Public health agencies frequently test water for levels of fecal coliform to determine if public lakes are safe for swimming. Contact your local public health office to learn more about testing in your area.

Learn more about Canada geese at Michigan.gov/Waterfowl

DNR Offices

Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or visit us online at www.Michigan.gov/DNR

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