

GEESE

Geese are large-sized duck birds, which spend more time on the ground than other duck birds. Our goose species can be divided into two groups, grey geese nesting in Finland and migrating dark species. Both sexes are similar in appearance.

Largest one is greylag goose, which is well-recognized from a silver white part in front of the wing top surface. The most numerous species is bean goose and the smallest is lesser white-fronted goose. The darkest of species is brent goose, which has got its name from the white fleck on the sides of the neck, Barnacle goose has white cheeks. In addition we occasionally have Canada goose and Red necked goose.

POPULATION AND DISTRIBUTION AREA:

Geese populations have experienced many changes on passing century. In the beginning they reduced steeply, but last few decades the development has turned to be the opposite. The reason to this is better regulated hunting. Exception to this is lesser white-fronted goose, which nesting population was assessed to be about 200 couples in 1950's, but which nowadays has lost almost completely. Our other geese species are growing. The focus of greylag geese has moved from the northern Gulf of Bothnia to the southwestern archipelago. Nowadays bean geese are guessed to be about 1500 couples and they have spread along eastern boundary and most of Lapland.

NESTING:

Geese become family mature in 2-3 years of age. Couples' relationships last for lifetime. In the springtime geese increase their weight with more protein containing nourishment so that the laying of eggs and the incubation can be possible. The nest is made from plant parts and feathers which the mother goose takes from her chest to make the nest softer. Male guards and defends the nest. There's 4-6 eggs and the incubation lasts for 4 weeks.

FOOD:

Geese are herbivores from the beginning. They eat sprout of the grass plants, seeds, berries, the roots of the plants, cloves, grain, sugar beet and potato. In the spring the sprout of the grain gives protein for nesting season.

MIGRATION AND OVERWINTERING:

To the friend of nature, seeing a gooseflock is a real sign of the spring. The geese are in a hurry to start the nesting on time, so that the chicks would hatch when the food is in abundance. First migrates arrive on March. The most important resting area is the Liminka - Tyrnävä region. Autumn emigration begins in the end of July or in the beginning of August. Moulting emigration is typical to geese species. In summertime geese are flightless for several weeks, because all the wingfeathers change at the same time. In the end of June, young non-nesting birds move to places where they change the whole plumage into a new one, like in Norway on the coast of Ruija. Geese mostly overwinter with their families as near the nesting areas as possible. Some of Finnish bean goose spend the mild winters in Skåne. During harsh winters they move to Holland, Germany or even further south. The most significant deathrate factor is the lack of food connected with cold winter weathers. Besides the subzero temperatures also dryness can be a threat.

