

THE SWANS, GEESE AND DUCKS

of the British Isles

By PETER SCOTT

PLATE I. SWANS

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor* (Gm.)

[No subspecies.] Now breeds wild in S. Scandinavia, Denmark, Russia, Asia Minor, Persia, east through Turkestan to Mongolia. In Britain common, but most, if not all, not truly wild and virtually non-migratory. Breeds on small ponds, rivers, canals, occasionally in colonies, notably Abbotsbury Swannery, Dorset, where up to 500 pairs. 5-7 eggs, late April, early May. Male occasionally incubates. Incubation 35 days. Cygnets often carried on parents' backs.

In winter wild stock to N. Africa, Black Sea, N.W. India, Korea. British stock frequently congregates on coast in bays, estuaries. Some migratory wild birds may join semi-tame flocks, but insufficient evidence available.

Food : water weeds, more rarely animal matter such as frogs, fish, etc.

More silent than other two British species of swans, but occasionally makes barking snort, rattle (mainly breeding season) and hiss.

Originally domesticated from wild race in 12th century or earlier, later all swans became property of Crown. Royal licence was granted to certain communities, landowners, companies, etc. These had 'Swan marks' either on bill or foot to identify swans. Annual marking of cygnets known as 'Swan Upping.' Unmarked swans automatically remained property of Crown. Customs and usages were enforced by King's Swanmaster. Mute Swans are still by custom Royal Birds in England but not in Scotland. Annual Swan Upping on Thames still conducted by Dyers and Vintners Companies and King's Swanmaster.

Identification by knob on bill in adults (larger in summer than in winter and larger in cob than in pen), by bill being orange, not yellow, also by frequent habit of sitting or swimming with wings raised over back. In flight downward wing beat produces comparatively loud humming sound not heard in Whooper or Bewick's. Dark plumage of immature gradually replaced by white feathers during first winter, some grey feathers may be retained until middle or end of second winter.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* (Yarr)

[Eastern Bewick's or Jankowski's Swan *C. c. jankowskii* from E. Siberia and China is larger, with broader bill and may on average show more yellow. These two old-world races are replaced in N. America by the Whistling Swan *C. c. columbianus*.]

Breeds in N. Russia from Kanin Peninsula and N. Siberia east to Lena Delta. 3-5 eggs mid-June, but date varies with break-up of ice. Incubation period not recorded. Has never bred in captivity.

In winter south to N. Europe including Britain, Caspian Sea, Central Asia ; regular in some parts W. Ireland (now less common than Whooper), Scotland ; fairly frequent England, Wales, November to April. Frequents flood waters, shallow lakes, sometimes estuaries. More numerous and widespread during severe winters but apparently declining in numbers.

Food : water weeds, grass.

Voice : musical 'hoo', 'cloo', shorter and more clipped, also less trumpet-like and less powerful than Whooper ; sometimes rapidly repeated. Unlike Mute Swan, trachea penetrates and forms a loop inside sternum as in Whooper.

Identification by small size, more rapid (silent) wingbeat, proportionately shorter neck, smaller (rounded) yellow patch on side of bill than in Whooper. Head and neck frequently heavily stained orange brown, which also occurs in Whooper and less frequently in Mute. Dark immature plumage gradually replaced by white feathers during first winter, some grey feathers may be retained until middle or end of second winter.

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus cygnus* (L.)

[Trumpeter Swan *C. c. buccinator*—the largest of all living waterfowl—is N. American representative of Whooper. At one time in danger of extinction, now between 1,000 and 1,500 and now virtually non-migratory except for local movements caused by freezing of lakes. Trumpeters inhabit lakes in Rocky Mountains. Icelandic Whooper *C. c. islandicus* is said to be slightly smaller, but is doubtfully distinct.]

Breeds Greenland, Iceland, N. Scandinavia eastwards to Kamchatka. A few pairs have bred in Scotland. 5 or 6 eggs (4-8 recorded), end May in Iceland, but dependent on break-up of ice. Incubation 35-42 days (31 recorded in captivity). Has frequently bred in captivity.

In winter to W. Europe including Britain, Black Sea, Caspian, Central Asia, China, Japan. Regular between October and May some parts Scotland (common in Outer Isles), Ireland, N. England. Frequents flood waters, shallow lakes, hill lochs, sometimes estuaries. More numerous and widespread during severe winters.

Food : water weeds ; also grazes.

Voice : loud musical 'hoo.' Male about 5 tones higher than female. Sometimes rapidly repeated 'poo-poo-poo-poo-poo.' As in Bewick's, trachea penetrates and forms loop inside sternum. This does not occur in Mute Swan.

Identification by large size, yellow extending below nostril, long neck more frequently held straight than in Mute, silent wingbeats. As in other swans head and neck sometimes stained orange brown. Dark immature plumage gradually replaced by white feathers during first winter, some grey feathers retained until middle or end of second winter.



Immature

Adults showing variable bill pattern

Adult showing Peacher staining

Immature

BEWICK'S SWAN

WHOOPER SWAN

Immature

MUTE SWAN

Peter Scott
1950

PLATE II. BLACK GEESE

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis canadensis* (L.)

[Eight other races have been recognised with ranges in N. America and N.E. Asia. *B. c. interior*, *moffitti*, *occidentalis*, *leucopareia*, *parvipes*, *hutchinsii*, *minima*, *asiatica*. The last 3 very small races may be specifically distinct from the larger forms.] Typical race breeds in Newfoundland, Labrador (E. of the Height of Land), Magdalen Is.

British Canada Geese, supposedly descended from this eastern race, introduced before 1678. Non-migratory, widespread mainly on park lakes in England (except S.W.), Wales, and S. Scotland. Nests often on islands in lakes, sometimes in small colonies. 5 or 6 eggs (2-11 recorded) early April. (In N. America sometimes nests in old nests of birds of prey in high trees.)

Food : grass, sprouting wheat, wheat and barley from stubbles.

Voice : resonant 'aahonk' second syllable higher than first.

Identification : black neck but pale breast, white cheek patch but black forehead. White ring below black 'neck stocking' is infrequent individual variation.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* (Bechst)

[No subspecies.] Breeds in N.E. Greenland, Spitzbergen, Novaya Zemlya, possibly Franz Josef Land, Kolguev, and N.W. Siberia. Nests often in colonies on ledges of cliffs, sometimes 1,000 ft high, also on islands in lakes and rivers or on open tundra. Usually 4-6 eggs (2-9 recorded), end May to mid-June, depending on ice and snow conditions. Incubation 26-28 days (24 recorded). In Greenland goslings reported to be carried down from cliffs by parents on back or in bill. Breeds well in captivity. Believed at one time to be hatched from Ship Barnacles or from a special goose-bearing tree.

Winters mainly in W. Scotland, Western Isles, Ireland, October to April, also coasts of Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Holland. World population probably less than 30,000, decreasing. Winter food : grass. Frequents salt marshes or grassy islands, sometimes grass fields near coast.

Voice : monosyllabic bark, 'gnuk', sometimes rapidly repeated ; like pack of Pekinese.

Highly gregarious and apparently more 'flock conscious' than other species of geese. Behaviour nervous but less wary.

Identification : black and white goose, prominent white face, including forehead ; black extends down to breast.

LIGHT-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla hrota* (Muller)

[Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla* (Baltic and N. Sea), see below. Pacific Black Brant *Branta bernicla nigricans* represents species on W. coast N. America, E. coast Asia. Some recent indications that *B. b. nigricans* is specifically distinct.]

Breeds on coasts of E. Arctic Canada, Greenland, Spitzbergen, perhaps

Franz Josef Land. Nests in colonies usually on islands. 3-5 eggs (2-8 recorded) mid-June (Spitzbergen) but depending on ice break-up. Incubation probably about 28 days. Has never bred in captivity.

Winters on W. side of Britain, notably Ireland and on Atlantic coast of U.S. from New Jersey to N. Carolina. Essentially marine in habit. Seldom seen inland. Winter food: green seaweeds (*Zostera* spp., *Enteromorpha* spp., *Ulva* spp.) World stocks of all three races of Brents disastrously reduced by failure of *Zostera* in North Sea, Atlantic and Pacific during 1930's. Formerly very large, now much smaller, flocks in estuaries of Ireland (where commonly referred to as 'Barnacle' or 'Sea Barnacle' to distinguish them from 'Land Barnacle' *B. leucopsis*) from early October till April, May.

Voice: monosyllabic 'rroonk' or 'truk' soft in quality and less loud than other geese.

Identification: conspicuous white stern, pale flanks and belly (variable), black head and breast with white fleck on side of neck (absent in immature which also shows more prominent wing bars.)

DARK-BELLIED BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla bernicla* (L.)

[Subspecies see above.] Appears to differ from light-bellied form only in plumage and geographical range. Breeds in Arctic Europe and Asia from Novaya Zemlya and Kolguev, east to Taimyr Peninsula. Has never bred in captivity.

Winters on the coasts of Germany, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, England and Scotland. In Britain flocks (now greatly reduced) mainly confined to east and south coasts; arrive later than light-bellied form—from November to March. Numbers much higher in severe winters.

Food, voice, identification: as for light-bellied, but flanks and belly much darker and back less brown more blue-grey. Intermediate forms occur and the two races occasionally mix in winter.

RED-BREASTED GOOSE *Branta ruficollis* (Pall.)

[No subspecies.] Breeds on Siberian coastal tundra from the Ob to the Khatanga. 4-5 eggs [9 recorded] mid- to end June, depending on ice break-up. Breeds in captivity. Incubation: 25-26 days.

Winters Caspian, Aral Sea, rarely Black Sea, Greece, etc. (Hungarian plains in small numbers on passage.) Accidental in W. Europe. Usually in flocks of European White-fronted Geese. Eleven fully authenticated records for Britain; near London, 1766; Wycliffe (Yorks) c. 1766; Berwick-on-Tweed (Northumberland) 1818; Maldon (Essex) 1871; two S. Devon and one Norfolk, dates not recorded; Severn (Gloucester) 1909 and another 1942; Milford Haven (Pembroke) 1935; Shropshire, 1950; some others recorded, but not substantiated. Food: grass. Notably gregarious.

Voice: loud, shrill, disyllabic 'kik-wik' or kee-kwa'; syllables disjointed and staccato. All movements very quick and head movements extremely rapid when feeding.

Identification: by striking plumage pattern. At a distance white flank stripe most conspicuous feature.

CANADA GOOSE

CANADA GOOSE
showing variable
white neck ring

Immature

Immature

Adult

Adult

LIGHT BELLED
BRENT GOOSE

DARK BELLED
BRENT GOOSE

Another adult
showing variable face
pattern and colour

Immature

Immature

Adult

BARNACLE
GOOSE

REDBREADED
GOOSE

PLATE III. GREY GEESE

YELLOW-BILLED BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis fabalis* (Lath)¹

[Four other races occupy breeding ranges in Arctic Russia and Siberia : Middendorf's Bean Goose *A. f. sibiricus* (eastern representative) ; Western Bean Goose *A. f. rossicus* (western high Arctic form ; see below) ; Eastern Bean Goose *A. f. serrirostris* (eastern high Arctic form with thick bill) ; Sushkin's Goose *A. f. neglectus* (pink-billed and legged form with little-known W. Asiatic range).]

Breeds in taiga (wooded country) in Arctic, from Lapland eastwards to Yenesei. 4-6 eggs (3-7 recorded), early June (Scandinavia) ; incubation, 27-29 days. Breeds well in captivity. In winter to W. Europe, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Transcaucasia, Turkestan. Now very local and rather rare in Britain from November to April, mostly Scotland—in flocks usually of under 100.

Food : grass, some roots ; frequents inland pastures, often roosting on hill lochs.

Voice : reedy and bassoon-like, 'ung-unk', not unlike lower notes of Pink-footed Goose ; sometimes reminiscent of sheep. The most silent of Grey Geese.

Identification : orange legs, orange and black bill (combination variable, sometimes yellow rather than orange) ; brownest of Grey Geese, whitish feather edges accentuate feather pattern on back and scapulars. Sometimes narrow white band (or 'front') at base of bill.

WESTERN BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis rossicus* (Buturlin)

[Subspecies—see above.] Breeding range not fully worked out. Probably breeds in Kolguev, Novaya Zemlya and possibly on tundra shores of Arctic Russia and Siberia W. of Yenesei. Like *A. f. serrirostris* it breeds N. of the tree-line, whereas *A. f. fabalis* and *A. f. sibiricus* are normally woodland-breeding races. Probably exists in much smaller numbers than Yellow-billed race.

Winter range imperfectly known, but numerous in Holland where habitat different from yellow-billed Bean Goose. Probably occurs Mediterranean, Black and (possibly) Caspian Seas, Turkestan. Eastern limits of range not recorded.

¹ Some obscurity surrounds the purely nomenclatorial question of whether *fabalis* of Latham or *arvensis* of Brehm should be used for this race. Opinion 88 of the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature indicates that *fabalis* should be retained in spite of the recent British decision to replace it with *arvensis*.

There is some doubt whether this race has occurred in Britain. It should probably be accepted as a straggler, as odd birds, usually attached to flocks of White-fronted Geese appear to belong to this race.

Identification : as for Yellow-billed Bean Goose, but orange on bill probably always confined to narrow strip across bill, whereas in Yellow-billed race it is *usually* more extensive ; bill shorter and deeper ; head usually darker ; general colour usually slightly more slaty, less brown ; white 'front' occurs less frequently. It should be noted that in almost all characters *rossicus* and *fabalis* overlap and that intermediate birds may be impossible to identify with certainty. Flocks, however, usually indicate clearly to which race they belong. Stragglers to Britain among White-fronted Geese appear to be nearly always of *rossicus* or overlapping type. *A. f. rossicus*, not at present shown in Plate II, should probably have been included, but above conclusions have been reached since reproduction was made.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus* (Baillon)

[Has been regarded as geographical race of Bean Goose *A. fabalis* but should be given full status as allopatric species. No subspecies.] Breeds in N.E. Greenland, Iceland, Spitzbergen, possibly Franz Josef Land. Nests in colonies on cliffs (often in river gorges) 4 or 5 eggs (up to 8 recorded). Incubation 25-28 days. Rarely breeds in captivity. Winters almost entirely in England and Scotland, a few in Holland, some in Germany, rare in Ireland. Records of Pink-footed Geese from Near and Middle East possibly referable to Sushkin's Goose *A. a. neglectus*. World population probably between 30,000 and 40,000. Arrives Britain end of September, leaves end April-early May.

Food : grass, grain from stubbles (principally oats), sprouting wheat, potatoes.

Winters in large flocks, roosting on estuaries, or sometimes hill lochs and surrounding heather. Many favoured localities constantly changing over period of 15-20 years.

Voice : musical 'ung-unk', higher than Bean. Sometimes 'king-wink' or often repeated 'wink-wink-wink.'

Identification : pink legs, pink and black bill (combination variable) ; blue grey back and shoulders dark head, whitish feather edges accentuate pattern on scapulars. Sometimes narrow white band (or 'front') at base of bill.

EUROPEAN WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons albifrons* (Scop.)

[Three, possibly four other subspecies : Greenland Whitefront, *A. a. flavirostris* ; American Whitefront, *A. a. frontalis* ; Tule Goose *A. a. gambelli* ;

(possibly *gambelli* should be applied to intermediate sized goose between *frontalis* and Tule Goose, in which case another scientific name must be found for latter). Including all races White-fronted Goose is most numerous species of goose in world.] European race breeds on Arctic coast of Russia and Siberia (eastern limit not defined). Nests on open tundra, islands in rivers, sometimes in colonies; 3-5 eggs (probably up to 7), mid-June, but depending on ice break-up; incubation, 27-28 days. Breeds in captivity.

Winters in England (October-March), W. Europe, Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas, N. India, China, Japan. Sometimes large flocks on estuaries, but also small scattered parties, frequenting flood waters inland. Decreasing in Europe.

Food: grass, sometimes young wheat. Less commonly seen on arable land than other Grey Geese.

Voice: musical, high pitched, usually disyllabic 'kow-lyow' or 'lyo-lyok' also trisyllabic. Some notes similar to Pinkfoot.

Identification: orange legs, pink bill, white forehead, black bars on belly (individually variable in extent and pattern); immatures do not have black bars nor is white forehead acquired until late in first winter; immatures also have some black on tip and culmen of bill.

GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons flavirostris* (Dalgety and Scott)

[Subspecies see above.] Breeds in W. Greenland: breeding habits, voice and food similar to Whitefront. Has bred in captivity. Winters in Ireland (September-April or May), W. Scotland, accidentally in family parties Wales, W. England, recorded eastern N. America. World population possibly between 20,000 and 30,000. Most important wintering grounds Wexford Slobs (S.E. Ireland).

Identification as for Whitefront but bill yellow (slightly longer) and plumage much darker—chocolate brown, pale feather edges narrower or absent, white tip to tail narrower, black bars show tendency to be more extensive. Immature can be confused with Bean Goose but bill and head smaller and 'patterning' on back and scapulars much less noticeable.

LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser erythropus* (L.)

[Although closely related to *A. albifrons*, regarded as distinct species. No subspecies as yet described.] Breeds from Norwegian Lapland, eastwards to the Kolyma in Siberia and perhaps to Chuckchi Peninsula. Nests near mountain

lakes and tarns, often in fairly dense Dwarf Birch scrub. 4 or 5 eggs (3-7 recorded), early June (Lapland). Incubation 25-28 days. Has bred in captivity.

Winters in S. Europe, Black Sea, Caspian (one flock estimated 50,000 in 1938), Turkestan, N.W. India, China, Japan. Accidental in Britain: Fenham Flats (Northumberland) 1886; Holbeach (Lincs) 1942; Acle Marshes (Norfolk) 1949; New Grounds (Gloucestershire) 1945-46 (2), 1946-47 (3), 1948-49 (1), 1949-50 (3).

Food: grass, consorts with Common Whitefront in Britain and Hungary.

Voice: very high pitched in male, 'kyu-yu' or commonly trisyllabic 'kyu-yu-yu'. Female 'kow-yow'.

Identification: yellow eyelids, otherwise much like small Whitefront *except* bill much smaller, pinker; white forehead sometimes higher on crown; back and scapulars darker, less patterned; black bars on belly usually less heavy.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser anser* (L.)

[Eastern Greylag *A. a. rubrirostris* (paler with pink bill) replaces *A. a. anser* from Poland, Hungary, Balkans, eastward through Mesopotamia, Caspian, Seistan, N.W. India to China and Kamchatka. *A. a. sylvestris*, from Iceland and Norway, to Scotland in winter, may be distinct race, but some doubt exists.] Breeds in Iceland, Scandinavia, Baltic area, N. Scotland and Western Isles, also locally in Central Europe south to Balkans and N. Africa. (Eastern limit of range not fully worked out.) Only indigenous goose which breeds in Britain. Nests on moorlands in heather, islands in lochs, coastal islets, sometimes in small colonies. 4-6 eggs (3-8 recorded), mid- to end April in Scotland. Incubation 27-28 days. Breeds freely in captivity.

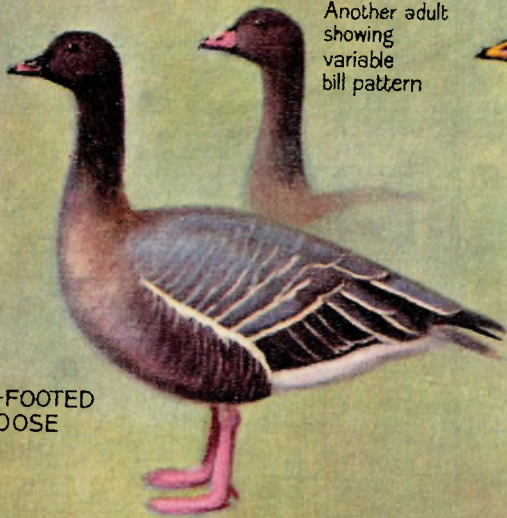
Scottish breeding population more or less resident, but northern breeders winter in Scotland (October-April), N.W. England, E. and S. Ireland, France, Spain. On passage in Holland sometimes in great numbers.

Food: mainly grass, but grain from stubbles, sprouting wheat; frequents grass marshes near estuaries or lochs.

Voice: 'aahng-ung-ung' or 'gaahnk', very like farmyard goose.

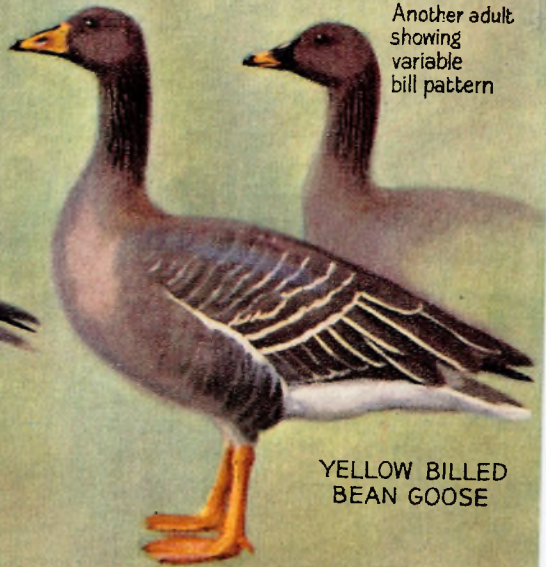
Identification: pink legs, orange bill without black; rather pale goose except for brown back, pale head and neck; fore wing very pale grey; some black spots on belly (usually more in Eastern race). Sometimes narrow white band (or 'front') at base of bill.

PINK-FOOTED
GOOSE



Another adult
showing
variable
bill pattern

YELLOW BILLED
BEAN GOOSE



Another adult
showing
variable
bill pattern

Adult

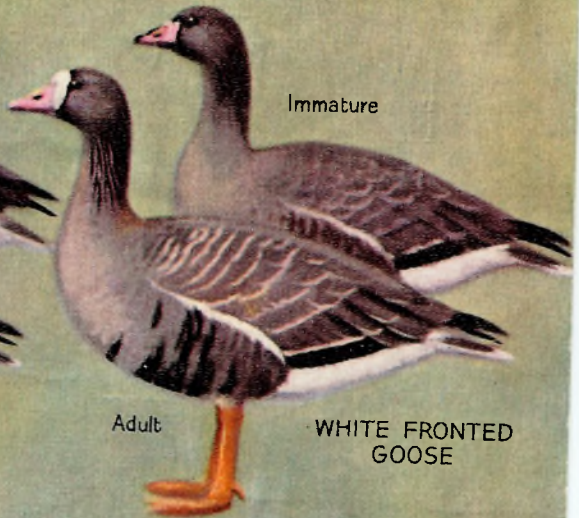
GREENLAND
WHITE FRONTED
GOOSE



Immature

Adult

WHITE FRONTED
GOOSE



Immature

GREYLAG
GOOSE



Adult

LESSER
WHITEFRONTED
GOOSE



Immature

PLATE IV. SNOW GEESE

LESSER SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens hyperboreus* (Pall)

[Greater Snow, *A. c. atlanticus* has eastern N. American range (see below). Blue Goose *A. c. caerulescens* has central N. American range (see below) and may prove to be colour phase of Lesser Snow.] Breeds on Arctic coast of N. America from Hudson's Bay westward, and in N.E. Siberia, probably as far west as the Lena. Nests, often in large colonies on open tundra, islands in lakes, rivers. Sometimes mixed colonies with Blue Geese with which it frequently crosses. 4-6 eggs (8 recorded) mid-June, but depending on break-up of ice and melting snow. Incubation 24-28 days. Breeds freely in captivity.

In winter south to Gulf of Mexico, California (very large flocks), China, Japan. Accidental in Europe. About 120 British records not usually distinguished between Lesser and Greater Snow. Some recent records possibly attributable to escapes from captivity. At Woburn Park Lesser Snow Geese were kept in a free state for many years. Three shot Wexford 1871 apparently Lessers and probably wild origin.

Food : mainly grass, rushes (uprooted), stubbles in autumn and sprouting wheat on spring migration (Canadian Prairie Provinces).

Voice : monosyllabic 'kaah' or 'kaahk', rather harsh and unmusical, also conversational bassoon-like 'zung-ung-ung-ung'.

Identification : white goose with black tipped wings. Immature soft grey ; some grey feathers may remain till bird is one year old. Slighter and usually a little smaller than Greater Snow, with smaller bill, lankier legs.

All races of Snow Geese sometimes show head heavily stained orange-brown.

BLUE GOOSE *Anser caerulescens caerulescens* (L.)

[Possibly colour phase of Lesser Snow with some degree of geographical segregation, i.e., a subspecies in the making ; degree to which the process has developed still obscure. Greater Snow *A. c. atlanticus* is eastern representative of Lesser ; so far 'Greater Blue Goose' has not been recorded.] Breeds on S.W. corner of Baffin Island, Southampton Island, and sparsely in Perry River region. Breeding range still very restricted but apparently spreading, especially westward. Breeding grounds first discovered by J. Dewey Soper in 1929 in Fox Basin (Baffin Is.). Nests in large colonies in open tundra, sometimes crossing with Lesser Snow (usually at edges of colonies or in isolated pairs) : 2-5 eggs (clutch size apparently smaller than in Lesser Snow, but data insufficient to

infer physiological difference) mid-June, but depending on ice break-up. Incubation 28 days. Breeds freely in captivity. Downy young sooty brown with yellow spot under chin, entirely different from golden yellow young of Lesser Snow. Goslings of mixed pairs either all dark or some of each (never parti-coloured or intermediate); indication Blue form dominant.

Winters in vast flocks, on coast of Gulf of Mexico, chiefly Louisiana. Migration route in Mississippi 'flyway,' but apparently moving further west, especially in spring. Up to three Blue Geese have appeared among Greenland Whitefronts on Wexford Slob, Ireland, during recent years as follows: three (two possibly immature) 1946-47; one with hybrid young (x Whitefront) in company 1947-48; one (♀) with similar hybrid young, but mated to Lesser Snow 1948-49; one with similar hybrid young 1949-50; reports state that white-headed geese (taken to be freak Greylags) were seen there during several winters between about 1937 and 1946. These Blues may have been escapes, but a wild origin seems at least equally, if not slightly more probable, especially as migration to Greenland is indicated by hybrid goslings.

Food and voice the same as Lesser Snow.

Identification: dark grey goose with white head and neck. Immatures, dark grey all over except for white spot under chin. Head becomes spotted and finally white during first winter.

GREATER SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens atlanticus* (Kennard)

[Subspecies see above.] Breeds on coasts of N. Greenland, Ellesmere Land and adjacent islands; 4-6 eggs (3-7 recorded) end June, but depending on ice break-up; incubation 28 days (captivity). Breeds freely in captivity.

Winters on islands off Atlantic coast of U.S. from Chesapeake Bay to N. Carolina, notably Pea Island. On migration collects for a few weeks in great numbers at Cap Tourmente in St. Lawrence Estuary (where a few Blue Geese usually present—possibly Greater Blues).

World stock about 17,000, apparently increasing (12,000 in 1938). Only 14 Snow Geese recorded in Britain definitely identified as belonging to this race, but probably large majority of Snow Geese which have crossed Atlantic are Greater. (About 100 records indicate wild origin.)

Food: stems and roots of rushes, also grass. As with other Snow Geese feeding consists of uprooting more than grazing.

Voice: similar to Lesser Snow.

Identification: same as Lesser Snow but larger on average; stockier in build, larger head, heavier bill, legs proportionately shorter, thighs show less.

Adult
showing
feather
staining

**GREATER
SNOW
GOOSE**

Adult

Immature

**LESSER
SNOW GOOSE**

Adult
showing
feather
staining

Adult

Immature

Intermediate
form

**BLUE GOOSE or
BLUE PHASE of
LESSER SNOW GOOSE**

Adult
(darkest form)

Immature
up to
6-7 months

Immature
6-10 months

Peter Scott 1953



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