

School-to-Nature



CANADA GOOSE

The Canada Goose has become a common sight in our area. Their natural habitat is marshes, ponds, and fields, but they also like to forage on open lawns and in park areas, any place where a large grass expanse gives them early warning of any nearby animal predators such as foxes or coyotes. Goose eggs are also preyed upon by wolverines, gulls, eagles, and ravens.

Canada Geese are migratory by nature; and those who summer in Canada may pass through here in late autumn, flying south in their “V” formations, honking to encourage one another and taking turns in the lead (listen and watch especially late in the day). But not all of them migrate—some travel short distances or not at all. We have some Canada Geese in our area year-round because of available open waters for shelter, and places to feed, all through winter. They are grass and plant-eaters in summer, switching to seeds and berries in winter. They welcome soybeans and corn left in the fields and may even approach backyard feeders where corn is put out for squirrels, deer, or turkeys.

These geese typically begin breeding in their 4th year of life, bonding in pairs and defending a nesting territory. The female creates a nest of grasses and mosses, often on top of a muskrat mound in a marshy area, and adds her own feathers and down from her chest. (Occasionally Canada Geese may make a nest in a very quiet garden or lawn space.) The female lays 2-8 eggs. She does the incubating while the male guards the nest. Goslings hatch in about a month, and will leave the nest at about 2 days old. At that age they are ready to swim, eat, and dive on their own. They stay close to their parents until they are about a year old. Canada Geese mate for life, and they live in large family-based flocks.

Because they are territorial and very protective of the flock, Canada Geese have been known to approach, threaten, or even attack humans, to get them to back off. Good advice is to keep a safe distance from Canada Geese, especially during spring/early summer nesting time.

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Note: they are not called **Canadian** geese, always **CANADA** geese.