Wild Geese
— Part 2 —

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The Brant Family
Within the brant family are five well defined species. As is the case with true geese, they enjoy wide distribution throughout the northern hemisphere. The five species consist of Canada goose, the true Brant, the Barnacle Goose, Red-breasted Goose, and the Hawaiian or Nene Goose.

The Canada Goose is certainly the best known of all North American species. It is found throughout much of North America where at least 11 subspecific races have been recognized. These range in size from the very large Giant Canada Goose, which has been recorded with weights in excess of 20 pounds, to the tiny Cackling and Aleutian Canada Geese weighing as little as three or four pounds. All races of Canada Geese are marked alike. The head and neck is black with the familiar white cheek patch. As is true with all members of the brant family, feet and bills are black. The body color ranges from gray to brown, depending upon sub-species and, as is true with most geese, the pigmentation is darker on the back than on the underside. During recent years, certain races of Canada Geese have enjoyed a substantial increase in population. This is largely as a result of their capability to adapt to an environment which has a close proximity to humans. As an example, they are fond of golf courses, where they are frequently encountered in substantial numbers. The tender green grasses and waterways are much to their liking, and they don't hesitate to partake of an inviting environment.

The true Brant are represented by four sub-species. These are the Atlantic Brant, the Pacific or Black Brant, the little known Laurence's Brant and the Russian Brant. Brant are unique among geese in that they are almost exclusively marine in habit. Other than when they come ashore during the nesting season, almost their entire life is spent upon salt water. They feed upon marine vegetation, especially...
eel grass, which is a great favorite. In captivity, they graze on green grass and adapt to a terrestrial environment exactly like other geese. Brant are small, weighing three to four pounds. General plumage color is black and white. Although they are not brightly colored, they are dainty and graceful and pleasing in appearance.

The Barnacle Goose is medium to small. It breeds in Iceland and Spitzbergen and winters on the west coast of Europe, especially in Scotland and the British Isles. They are largely black and white with a substantial patch of white on the head and face. The name Barnacle Goose originated in a most unusual way. They were described long ago before bird migration was known. Observers of that time only knew the geese disappeared in the fall and re-appeared the following spring. The disappearance in the fall was explained by the possibility that the population simply disappeared and perhaps died. This did not explain the re-appearance in the spring until an enterprising observer of the time “discovered” that geese were produced by Barnacle trees! Barnacle trees, it was explained, produced barnacle shells. As these shells matured and ripened, they would split open allowing the contents to be released. Those contents that fell upon the ground came to naught. However, the contents that fell upon the water would develop and become Barnacle Geese, thus the species was able to perpetuate itself. Verification of this remarkable phenomenon was authenticated by eye witness accounts, including sketches and drawings of the actual event. It was not until much later, as bird migration became known, that it was realized Barnacle Geese actually spent their summers and reared their young in Iceland and Spitzbergen and returned to their winter home in Britain and Europe with the arrival of the fall. Old tales can die hard, and the story of Barnacle trees is still remembered today. The name Barnacle Goose has endured and, perhaps — just perhaps — maybe a few Barnacle Geese, indeed, do still come from Barnacle trees.

One of the most beautiful of all waterfowl is the tiny Red-breasted Goose of Russia. As is true with others of the clan, there is considerable black and white feathering. However, in addition there is a considerable amount of red, which is unusual in wild geese. The intricate patterns, especially on the head and neck, are impossible to describe. The color patterns, diminutive size, and graceful bearing make the little Red-breasted Goose truly magnificent. They breed in northern Russia and winter in southern Europe. The total population of Red-breasted Geese is not large, possibly not more than 5,000 individuals.

One of the most interesting of the clan is the Hawaiian or Nene Goose. As the name implies, it is native to Hawaii, and has become non-migratory. It has adapted to the high lava flows of the islands and has become almost entirely terrestrial. As a result, the feet and legs have evolved to fit the environmental change. The legs are much longer and heavier than those of other geese, and most of the webbing has disappeared from the feet as befits a bird adapted to walking rather than swimming. Feet and bill are black, and there is black feathering on the head. General plumage pattern is buffy brownish gray. They are very handsome. The history surrounding the Nene is quite interesting. There are a number of speculations regarding their origin. One that has an element of credence, and considerable acceptance, is that they originated from a common ancestor to the Canada Goose when individuals of that race made their way to the Hawaiian Islands, became non-migratory residents, and evolved into the Hawaiian Goose as we know it today. Historically, the Hawaiian Goose was comparatively abundant. However, when early traders introduced such predatory species as pigs, goats, rats and especially the mongoose, the Hawaiian Goose populations began to decline. By the mid-1900s, the population had been reduced to approximately 50. Fortunately, a few had been maintained in captivity by a private individual in Hawaii. From that source, Peter Scott of the Wildfowl Trust in England obtained three birds. As a result of that acquisition, the Trust was able to embark upon a successful breeding program. Ultimately, handreared birds from that program were sent to breeders in the United States where further breeding success was achieved. Eventually Hawaiian Geese were reared in sufficient numbers to return the birds for release back into their native habitat in Hawaii. Unfortunately, restrictive legislation has prevented efforts on behalf of the Hawaiian Goose from being successful as might have been possible. Despite the fact it does nothing to protect Hawaiian Geese in their native lands, restrictive legislation has been enacted which prevents aviculturists in the continental United States from fulfilling their potential to breed them in captivity. Fortunately, Hawaiian Geese are easily propagated in captivity, and it is estimated as many as 3,500 captive birds exist. If restrictions could be made more realistic, the number would increase dramatically. The full story is too involved for inclusion here. However, it has been well documented in an article authored by Walter B. Sturgeon, Jr., which was featured in a June/July 1990 issue of Watchbird. Those interested in the history of the Hawaiian Goose are referred to that article.

Wild geese adapt well to captivity and their requirements are quite easily met. Geese are essentially grazing animals and fresh, tender green grass is a basic food. Captive birds should be provided with supplemental food. Whole grains, such as wheat and corn, provide needed nourishment in winter when green grass might be in short supply. As an additional supplement, commercial rations prepared for chickens or turkeys are also good. In feeding such rations, it is important to avoid medicated varieties. Although geese are more terrestrial than ducks, they are still waterfowl. At least some water area should be available and, indeed, if geese are to be bred successfully, swimming water is a requirement. Actual copulation is accomplished in the water, and without it any eggs produced will not be fertile. The term swimming water is often misunderstood. The amount of water need not be large — just enough that both birds can float themselves at the same time. A pool as little as four feet across and six inches in depth will suffice. Geese are territorial during breeding season and if more than one pair is in a single pen the dominant pair will assume control. In larger areas, where there is an expanse of space and water, a number of pairs can be kept together. Geese are very hardy and weather and temperature fluctuations present little problem. Exclusive of Hawaiian
Geese, which have acclimated to what is essentially a tropical climate, geese handle cold very well. Indeed, sub-zero temperatures hold little fear, especially if open water is available. Hawaiian Geese are not acclimated to cold and must be protected from sub-freezing conditions.

Geese normally form permanent pair bondings. Once mated, a pair will remain faithful to one another. However, if one or the other of the pair for any reason should be lost, the remaining bird will usually remate. Breeding is seasonal and is largely triggered by weather conditions and the length of daylight hours. Most geese will nest during April and May. At an appropriate time, the female (known as a goose; males are ganders) will scratch out a depression in the ground. With help from the male, she will gather nearby dry material, usually dry vegetation, which is the basis for the nest. Eggs are usually deposited on alternate days. As each egg is deposited, it is covered with dry nesting material until the clutch is complete. A normal clutch is five, but the number can vary either way. Once complete, the female lines the nest with a blanket of down plucked from her own breast. Incubation is done by the female alone but the gander stands close by and protects her and the nest. Incubation periods vary according to species. Larger species take 28 to 30 days, and smaller species somewhat less. Inasmuch as incubation is not initiated until the full clutch is complete, the goslings hatch at the same time. The young are precocious and as soon as they are dry they are ready to leave the nest and follow their parents. In the wild, the young subsist almost exclusively on tender green grasses. In captivity, it is wise to provide some supplemental feed in the form of a good poultry ration. Chick or turkey grower works well. It should be non-medicated, and the protein level should not be much above 16 percent. Of large quantities of low protein, high roughage food. Supplemental foods needs to be taken into account in the feeding program. It goes without saying that being waterfowl, they will consume, and need to consume, large quantities of water.

When goslings are incubator hatched, or taken from the parents for handrearing, certain provisions are necessary for their well being. One of the first requirements is to be certain they are kept warm and dry. Of necessity, they will have to be confined to a pen area sufficiently well constructed to prevent them from wandering off and becoming lost. Food and water utensils will need to be provided. Shallow pans work well for food, and chick watering founts will suffice for water. Open water containers are ill advised. If given the opportunity, goslings will get directly into the water and can easily soak themselves, causing chilling and frequently death as a result. Water containers should be designed so the chicks can drink, but cannot get into the water. Appropriate water founts can be obtained at any poultry or feed store.

When placing food and water containers in the pens, they should be spaced sufficiently far apart that the babies must walk from one to the other to feed and drink. If placed close together, they will dabble first in one and then the other, making a mess of themselves, the water and the food dishes.

When handrearing goslings, it is important they be kept warm. They must also be provided with shade from hot sun. It is important to protect them from cold showers or rain. When left with the parents, of course, this is no problem as the parent birds will cover and brood them when necessary. At night, handreared babies will need to be either brought inside where appropriate warmth can be provided, or, if left outdoors, they must have adequate protection from the elements and proper warmth must be provided. In most instances, it is ill advised to leave them outdoors at night as marauding predators are an inevitable possibility for tragedy. Far better to bring them in and be sure than to gamble they will be safe outdoors.

For those who have appropriate accommodations, wild geese are a splendid addition to an aviary. In addition to being relatively easily maintained, they are also highly ornamental and adapt very well to an association with humans. Perhaps one of the most pleasant surprises of all, particularly for those who are familiar with the price structure of some of the psittacines, is the fact that a pair of comparatively rare geese can be purchased for as little as two or three hundred dollars. In view of the adaptability of geese to an avicultural facility, the natural grace and beauty of the birds themselves, the ownership of a pair or two of these fine birds can add much enjoyment to an avicultural collection. 
Avian Trade Shows & Seminars

Caroline Ornamental Bird Society
Bird Swap, Sale and Raffle
April 16, 1994
from 7:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.
Craven County Fairgrounds
Hwy. 70 east of New Bern, NC
For information call:
Ken Bradley (910) 942-9245

Bird Clubs of Virginia
sponsors the
10th Virginia Bird Convention & Bird Mart
April 9-10, 1994
National speakers, bird care mini seminars, huge bird mart, bird sale room, giant raffle.
Omni International Hotel at Wateredge
777 Waterside Dr., Norfolk, VA
Call (804) 988-5664
For info call Dick Ivey, (804) 898-5090

Greater Dayton Bird Expo and Auction
April 10, 1994
Montgomery County Fairgrounds
Dayton, Ohio
For information contact:
Paula or Pete Desalvo (513) 848-4819
15 W. Franklin St., Bellbrook, OH 45305

Way Out West Bird Expo,
Arizona's Biggest Bird Mart
April 17, 1994
State Fairgrounds
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Everything from finches to macaws,
cages, feed, bird toys and more.
$3.50 adults / $2.50 seniors / $1.50 children 5-12
For vendor info: (902) 973-9282

Buffalo Hookbill Association
3rd Annual Exotic Bird Show
April 17, 1994
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
in the Grange Bldg.
Erie County Fairgrounds, Hamburg, NY
For info. call: (716) 497-5046

5th Annual America's Family Pet Show
at the Fairplex - Pomona, California
Los Angeles County Fairgrounds
April 22-24, 1994
Birds, dogs, cats, fish, reptiles, pigs, llamas, etc.
For info. contact Tom H. Mclaughlin,
Western World Pet Supply Assn.
406 South First Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006-3829
(818) 447-2222
Fax (818) 447-8350

Madison Area Cagebird Assn. of Wisconsin
(M.A.C.A.W.)
presents its
7th Annual Bird Fair
May 1, 1994
Dane County Forum Exposition Center
Madison, Wisconsin
Vendors, hourly raffles, morning seminar.
For info. call:
Rita Shimnuck (608) 798-4877
or Table rental call:
Jennifer Dobson (608) 241-2635

Macaw Landing Foundation
Public Viewing Aviary
Third Thursday of each month
Jantzen Beach Center, exit 308 off I-5
Mon. - Fri. 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Sat. & Sun. 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Bird care seminar. Speaker Pat Huff, D.V.M.
Macaw Landing 7:30 p.m.
For information call: (503) 286-0882

Tennessee Valley Exotic Bird Club
presents its
6th Annual Spring Exotic Bird Fair
May 6 & 7, 1994
Knoxville Convention Center
World's Fair Park
For information call:
Barb Kimmitt (615) 693-7841 or
Sandi Brennan (615) 753-0641
or write to TVEB, P.O. Box 51425
Knoxville, TN 37950-1425

The TVEBC is the host club for the
AFA '94 August 4-6 Convention.
Prepare yourself for a good time!

Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club
Spring Bird Fair
May 7, 1994
Hattendorf Center
10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
225 E. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL
Half mile east of Arlington Heights Road
For information call: (708) 705-6280

Northwest Exotic Bird Society
sponsors the
Washington Exotic Bird Fair
May 7, 1994
Puyallup Fairgrounds
Puyallup, Washington
10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
For information call:
Susan Hoyer (206) 441-0360

Family Pet Show
Detroit, Michigan
May 13, 14, 15, 1994
See more than 300 exhibitors,
hundreds of animal handlers,
4000 pets and 200 barnyard dwellers
at the
Michigan Exposition and Fairgrounds
Contact: Jerry Schoenith (313) 877-0385

Portland's Rose City Exotic Bird Club's
Spring '94 Bird Expo and Sale
May 14 and 15, 1994
Washington County Fairgrounds
Hillsboro, Oregon
For information contact:
Louise Dube, P.O. Box 1016, St. Helens, OR 97051
or phone (503) 398-0161

Arizona Aviculture Society
Spring Bird Mart
May 15, 1994
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Admission: $3.00
New location: 38th St. & Thomas, Phoenix
Vendors welcome
(602) 957-6034 or 973-0667

National Capital Bird Club's
Annual Bird Mart
May 15, 1994
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
John C. Wood Complex
3730 Old Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22030
For information:
P.O. Box 5, Liberteviyd, MD 21762
(301) 899-5965 or (703) 471-1231

West Pasco Exotic Bird Club's
Fifth Annual Bird Fair
May 15, 1994
from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
at the Hudson Community Club
Hudson, Florida
For information call:
Jackie (813) 865-7217 or Cindy (813) 868-0521

Central New York Caged Bird Club
Spring Sale and Exhibition
May 21, 1994
Great Northern Mall
Route 31, Clay, NY
For information contact:
Dave Dixon (715) 598-5927
or Debbie Johnson (715) 598-5024

3rd Annual Upper Midwest Bird Mart
May 21, 1994
Minnesota State Fairgrounds
Empire Commons Building
St. Paul, MN
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Admission $3, and under 12 $2
For information contact:
P.O. Box 20601, Bloomington, MN 55420
Call Nellie (612) 854-6439
or Dallas (612) 427-1046

Central Mississippi Bird Club
presents their
2nd Annual Bird Fair
May 21-22, 1994
Miss. State Fairgrounds
Jackson, Mississippi
For information contact:
W. Nations (601) 825-7809
Mary Moore (601) 924-1180
Candy Lott (601) 924-3893

Central Pennsylvania Cage Bird Club
Bird Mart & Pet Bird Show
May 22-24, 1994
Holiday Inn, Granville, PA
located at the Hershey-Harrisburg Exit #28,
off I-81 at Route 743
For information call:
Janet Landvater, bird mart mgr.
RD #1, Box 135-K, Hershey, PA 17033
Phone (717) 533-4251

Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club
presents its
Bird Fair
May 28, 29, 1994
at the Middle Tennessee State University Campus
Agriculture Pavilion-Livestock Center
Murfreesboro, TN
Contact Fair Chairman: Larry Crawford
1447 Twin Oak Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37130
Phone (615) 690-6906

Greater Rochester Hookbill Association
Sail and Auction
June 4, 1994
10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.
Admission free
Genesee Conservation League
1570 Penfield Rd., Penfield, NY 14526
For information write:
GRHA, P.O. Box 427, Penfield, NY 14526
or phone: Gloria Giraulo (716) 342-9529 or
Linda Matteson (315) 597-4836
Avian Trade Shows & Seminars

Gold Country Avicultural Society

- **3rd Annual Exotic Bird Mart**
  - **Location:** 1010 E. 12th St., Sonora, CA 95370
  - **Dates:** September 22-24, 1994
  - **Features:** Judges, educational seminars, vendors, DNA sexing, bird sale room, and more.
  - **For more information:** Contact SuE Egen, P.O. Box 41501, San Antonio, TX 78222

- **Mid-South Budgie Club**
  - **Hosts:** 7th Annual Budgie Show
  - **Date:** August 20, 1994
  - **Location:** 823 Murfreesboro Road, Nashville, TN 37215
  - **Features:** Judges, educational seminars, vendors, DNA sexing, bird sale room, and more.
  - **For more information:** Contact SuE Egen, P.O. Box 41501, San Antonio, TX 78222

**Notes:**
- The above events are part of the avicultural scene in the United States, with a focus on specialty clubs and shows that cater to various bird breeds and enthusiasts.
- Additional shows and seminars are listed on this page, including locations and dates for various avicultural-related events.
- For more information on these events, please refer to the contacts provided in the document.