

The CANADA GOOSE

The Canada Goose is a common North American water bird. There are many types of this goose which are alike but differ in size.

They are native to arctic and temperate North America although they have been introduced in other parts of the world.

They enjoy living in watery areas that are surrounded by open country. They can be found at lakes, river mouths and coastal swamps.



The Canada Goose is a large, handsome bird. Its head and long neck are black and it has a wide white band under its chin. Its plump body is brownish-grey. It has webbed feet which are good for swimming and for walking on wet or muddy ground. It can fly steadily for hours during its long migrations. It makes a loud honking sound. The male, called a gander, is slightly larger than the female, called a goose.

This strong-looking bird loves to eat plants, mainly young green vegetation, tender shoots and roots. Its bill is designed for holding and tearing blades of grass with a jerk of its head. It will graze for hours on grassy areas and eat available grains from fields. On the water it also likes small insects and fish.

Canada Geese are very family-oriented. They find a mate when they are about three years old and stay with this mate faithfully. The female lays her eggs in a reed nest lined with grass and feathers. The goose will pull downy feathers from her own breast for this. Both parents sit on the nest during the incubation time although it is usually the female, with the male standing guard. During this time, they moult, losing their flight feathers. They cannot fly away until they grow new ones. This is nature's way of ensuring that they will be there until the chicks hatch, 25-30 days later. In fact, they are very devoted parents. Both of them protect and care for the babies, called goslings. As the goslings grow, they join up with others and form small groups called crèches which are always looked after by a few adults. Adult geese can be aggressive, hissing at and chasing an attacker. In the autumn the young geese are able to migrate south for the winter with their parents.

Geese are very social. They like living in large flocks. If one of them is attacked, a number of others will group together to fight off the danger. Their huge migrations are part of flock life. They take place twice a year. In the autumn, thousands of these birds fly south from Canada to the warmer areas of the United States. Some even go to Mexico. In the spring, they will fly back north in time for the new season of growth. They learn the flight paths from their parents. By flying in a V-formation, a slip-stream is created which makes flying easier, except for the lead bird. Older birds take turns flying in the lead.

Many predators, including man, kill Canada Geese. They are protected by law but it is legal to shoot them in the hunting season if you have a licence. Also, dogs, racoons, foxes, owls and weasels will attack them or their babies and try to steal their eggs. However, Canada Geese fight back, especially when protecting the goslings.

Canada Geese used to be endangered but now they are very numerous. This can cause problems. Some people call them pests because of the large amount of faeces a flock of geese produces every day. This can pollute waterways. They can also be a danger near airports. It was a flock of Canada Geese that flew into the engines of an American aeroplane, causing an emergency landing in the Hudson River.

Headings and Trigger words

Use this column to write down a heading and trigger words to summarise each paragraph. (see CSI Stage 5B for more details)

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Set 4:3 ACTIVITIES

REMEMBERING - What are the facts

1. How often do Canada Geese migrate each year?
2. Where do Canada Geese go to when they migrate?
3. Write four questions like the ones above and the answers.
You must be able to find the answers in the report.

UNDERSTANDING - Show that you understand the information

4. Draw a picture, or pictures, to show why the Canada Geese fly in V-formation.
Include labels to explain what is happening in your drawings.
5. Choose one paragraph from the report. Decide on a heading for that paragraph. Write down some 'trigger words' (words that trigger the information in your head). Use the heading and trigger words to rewrite the paragraph in your own words.

APPLYING - Using the information in another way

6. **Canada Goose Poster**
Make a colourful poster for a wildlife park advertising this amazing bird.
A poster should have an eye-catching title, information in bullet points, and illustrations.
7. **A Day in the Life of a Canada Goose**
Use the information in the report to describe a day in the life of a Canada Goose. You can do this by writing a story, a poem or rap, a diary entry, or a comic strip with speech bubbles and captions. Try to include as many facts about the Canada Goose as you can.

ANALYSING - Identifying the features that help Canada Geese survive

8. **Information Web**
List all the physical features and behaviours of the Canada Goose mentioned in the report. Brainstorm ways in which these features and behaviours help the bird to survive. Present this information as an INFORMATION WEB.

Example :

CANADA GOOSE

 → flies in V-formation → help each other out

EVALUATING - Making judgments

9. **Vulnerability Rating** - Using the information you have been given in the report, make a decision about how AT RISK this species is. Include risks from predators and MAN.
1 = very secure, little threat from predators and man
10 = very high danger from predators and man - easy prey
Give reasons for your rating using information from the report or your own ideas.
10. **Verifying the Information** - It is important to check whether the facts are accurate.
 - Do an internet search on the Canada Goose (or look for resources in the library).
 - Make a list of at least three sources of information.
 - Tick off or highlight information in the report that agrees with what you have found.
 - Decide on the percentage of information that you have been able to verify.
10% = 1 or 2 facts ----- 50% = half the information ----- 100% = all the information

CREATING - Coming up with new ideas

11. **Canada Goose Upgrade - overcoming natural and man-made threats**
Make some adaptations to the physical features of the Canada Goose and the way it behaves so that these birds have a better chance of survival in their habitat. This might include
 - Better equipment for fighting off predators
 - Modifications so that different food can be caught and eaten
 - Improvements to provide better protection for eggs and chicks*Remember to include diagrams, labels, and descriptions to explain your interesting ideas.*