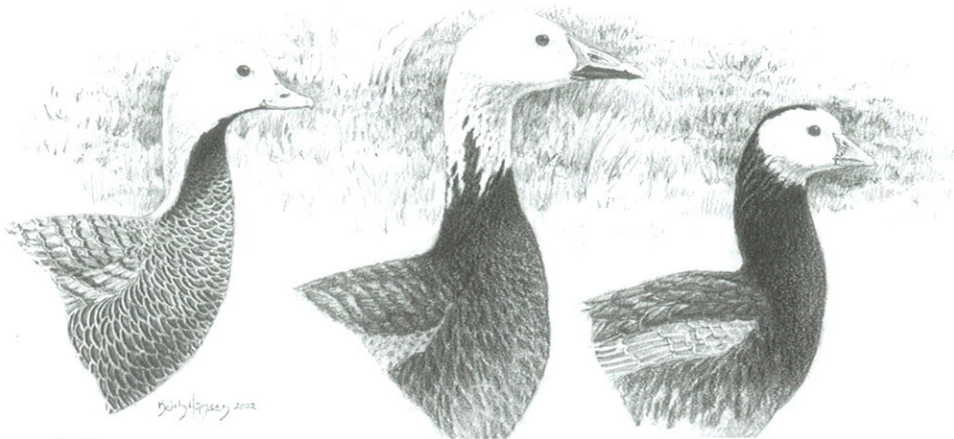


MAKE YOUR GANDERING MORE ENJOYABLE.

▼ From "Focus" to field trips

Birding with PRBO



Wild Geese

Rich Stallcup


PROBABLY EVER SINCE there were humans to dream, wild geese have been synonymous with freedom and wanderlust in our songs and poems. Once there were many millions more waterfowl than now. In the times when deafening choruses of spadefoot toads drove the river otters crazy, the flocks of geese and swans overhead could blacken out the day. Mostly they are gone now—but not all! While the wild geese used to come to everyone, we now pilgrim to their strongholds.

Thus begins an updated "Focus" column on this suite of wintering birds. The original essay appeared here in 1989. Along with the four races of Canada Goose

Above: Rare look-alikes are the adult Emperor Goose (left); the Blue Goose or dark-morph Snow Goose (center), and the dark-morph Ross' Goose (right).

found in California, the full text covers the light and dark forms of Snow Goose and Ross' Goose. A new illustration by Keith Hansen, featured here, is also included. To obtain this entire "Focus," visit our website—www.prbo.org—or contact PRBO at (415) 868-1221, extension 307.

As Rich Stallcup writes:

Knowing more about birds than simply their common names will surely make your gandering more enjoyable. 

PRBO Members' Events with Rich Stallcup

For more information, contact Melissa Pitkin at (415) 868-1221, extension 307, or mpitkin@prbo.org.

WEEKEND ■ JULY 13-14—Lassen National Park. Join us as we explore the Park and visit with PRBO biologists studying songbirds. \$150, not including lodging and food. Complete information sent upon registration. Limited to 15 participants.

DAY TRIPS 9:00 AM-3:00 PM. \$25/person. Call for detailed information. Trips limited to 15 participants.

■ MAY 25—Año Nuevo State Reserve. On the San Mateo coast; a hike to search for elephant seals and special birds.

■ AUGUST 25—Abbotts Lagoon. On the Point Reyes coast, a haven for shorebirds and waterfowl.

■ SEPTEMBER 22—Bodega Bay. Starting at Doran Beach County Park; exploring habitats filled with autumn birds.

■ OCTOBER 12—The Outer Point of Point Reyes. A search for fall migrants (and vagrants!) and seabirds.

■ NOVEMBER 3—San Francisco Urban Birding. From the Cliff House to Golden Gate Park to Lake Merced.

We hope you can join us for one of these exciting field days.

bird bio

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Characteristics: Sandpiper. 20-23 cm. Fall and winter: grayish above and whitish below, buffy gray chest and neck.

Spring and summer: reddish brown marked with blackish, giving a scaly appearance; undersides whitish with a black patch across the belly. The bill, decurved and longer than head, is blackish. Legs and feet are grayish or blackish.

Distribution: Winter migrant, fairly common. Arctic, circumpolar. Winters along coasts of U.S. to Mexico and southern Eurasia to northern Africa and India.

Habitat: In summer, wet tundra, alpine mountain tops. During fall, tidal flats, beaches, mudflats, and pools.

Feeding: Probes for small mollusks, crustaceans, and marine worms; in spring, for seeds.

Song: Flight call distinctive, loud *purrr* or *pjeer*. Display song (often heard on migration) a series of rolling harsh trills—*jrrre-jree-jrrrrjjjjjjji jrrrr jrrr jrrr*.

Life Span: Average 3-4 years.



Behavior Notes: Monogamous; strong fidelity to breeding territory leads to renewal of pair bonds in successive years. Female and male construct scrape (nest depression) in fairly dry ground of tundra or alpine meadow, usually near water, often concealed in vegetation; nest lined with withered willow leaves and lichen. Female incubates mostly at night, male in day. Female often leaves chicks well before they fledge.

—Melissa Pitkin, PRBO Education Coordinator