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Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

The Canada Goose is probably the most adaptable of all geese and has been introduced and established in Florida, Iceland, the British Isles, New Zealand, and Sardinia. It breeds from Arctic Alaska south to central California, east and south to Arkansas, and east to New Foundland.

Habitat. Canada Geese feed on a variety of vegetable matter, including seeds, grain, and aquatic vegetation. Some animal matter, such as crustaceans and mollusks, is also consumed (Howell 1932).

Canada Geese breed in a wide variety of wetland habitats including marshes, lakes, prairies, and savannas. The species prefers to nest on small islands surrounded by water, but frequently nests are located in dense vegetation near the edge of the water. On rare occasions it will nest up to 305 m (1,000 ft) from water or even a tree (Goodwin 1979). The hollow nest is lined with plant material and sometimes built up to a substantial structure, with an inner lining of down and feathers.

The number of eggs laid is highly variable, usually 5 or 6, but sometimes as few as 2 or as many as 11. The eggs are white and vary greatly in size depending on the size of the birds. The female incubates the eggs for 25 to 30 days. The goslings fly when they are 40 to 73 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988) and remain with their parents in family groups until the following spring (Harrison 1978).

Seasonal Occurrence. Small numbers of migratory Canada Geese are present in Florida during winter. Florida also hosts several local populations of resident Canada Geese, which are present in the state year-round.

Status. Up until the 1960s as many as 47,000 Canada Geese wintered in Florida, chiefly in the St. Marks area Wakulla County (Chamberlain 1960 in Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Those flocks are now short-stopping farther north, and the species has become uncommon to rare in Florida (Crider 1967). Since 1971, the population of migratory Canada Geese in Florida has been stable at around 1,000 birds (Forrester et al. 1987).

In 1967 and 1968 868 Canada Geese of the subspecies *maxima* (called *moffitti* by Palmer [1976]) were released in the Tallahassee area by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission [editor: now Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission]. In 1974 160 birds were released in northwestern Florida and 76 in the central peninsula south to Lake County. According to Spillan (1978 in Stevenson and Anderson 1994), a total of 1,450 nonmigratory Canada Geese were released in Florida, mostly in Jackson, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, Alachua, and Duval counties. By 1987 they had established breeding populations in Santa Rosa County, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Gainesville, Ocala, and Daytona Beach (J. McDaniel, pers. commun. in Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Atlas records in counties south of these locations were established for Manatee in 1986, Seminole in 1987, Pasco in 1988, and Dade in 1991. Although some of these records refer to birds recently released (B. Loftin, VRF 1987; L. McCullagh, VRF 1990), most birds are probably the offspring of those released in the 1970s and are extending their breeding range southward. The birds at the Hialeah Race Track in Dade County regularly wintered for many years but did not breed until 1991 (M. Wheeler, pers. commun.).

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Canada Goose

