

# The Blue Jay Bookshelf

**THE GIANT CANADA GOOSE.** By Harold C. Hanson. 1965. Southern Illinois Press, Carbondale, Illinois. 226 pp. \$9.75 U.S. \$11.75 Can.

Dr. Hanson believes that the Canada Geese nesting in the prairie areas of Canada and the northern United States belong to the giant race, *Branta canadensis maxima*, previously believed to be extinct. There is a "cline" or gradual gradation of size and coloration, the birds at the northern parts of this range being somewhat smaller. Birds of the smallest age and sex class — immature females — may weigh as little as eight to nine pounds, while the largest may reach 18 pounds, the usual weights of adults being in the range of nine to 13 pounds. Differentiation must be made from the other large races, *B. c. canadensis* of the Atlantic coast, *B. c. interior* of the Hudson Bay lowlands, and *B. c. moffitti* of the western states and British Columbia. Since the giant race is one-fourth to one-third larger than the others, a weight over 11 pounds is sufficient to eliminate all but the largest individuals of *moffitti* or *interior*. The "Giant Canada Goose" is also characterized by a wing span of six feet or more in adult males, an unusually long neck, a massive, spatula-shaped bill, a relatively smooth palate, and distinctively scutellate tarsi. They have a light-colored breast, often a wide neck ring and larger white cheek patches than the other large races. Frequently a white spot above the eye or a bar across the forehead is present. On local flights they tend to fly at lower altitudes and have a wing beat with a shallow stroke. Their voice is low-pitched but they are usually silent in flight.

For many years scientists recognized only one large race of the Canada Goose and the story of the efforts

of W. B. Mershon and R. P. Holland, both sportsmen, to secure scientific recognition of the giant Canada Goose makes fascinating reading.

Of equal interest is the account of the banding of flightless Canada Geese on the tundra of Keewatin, N.W.T., by Tom Sterling of Ducks Unlimited. These are non-breeding birds which have journeyed over 1000 miles north in order to molt. They belong to the giant race, and a number of the captured birds wore bands placed on them in Minnesota and Manitoba (and see *Blue Jay*, 21:134-135). This gives scientific confirmation to the remarkable observation of Samuel Hearne in the 1770's, who noted that the largest Canada Geese arrived in the far north later in the summer and did not breed, being known as the Barren Geese.

This book is recommended to serious ornithologists and keen sportsmen.—  
*C. Stuart Houston, Saskatoon.*

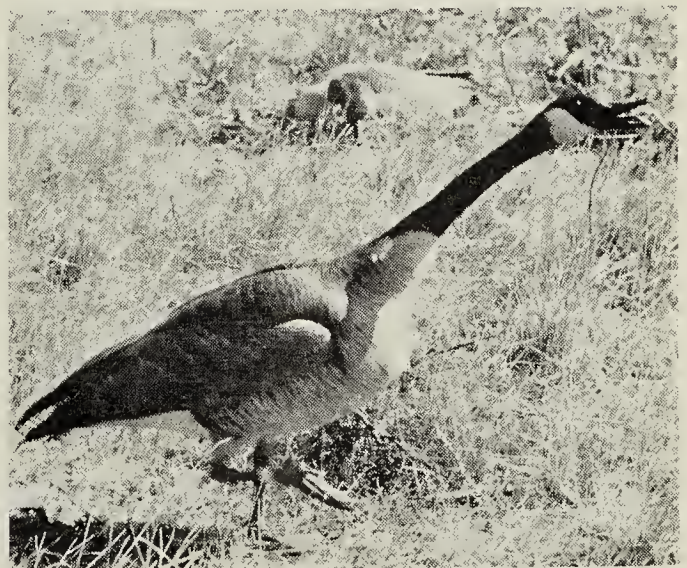


Photo by Fred W. Lahrman

Gander defending goose and nest, Regina