

Snow Goose-Canada Goose Hybrids

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Four wild geese were observed on Audubon National Wildlife Refuge in October and November, 1971, which appear to be Snow Goose-Canada Goose hybrids. (Figure 1) They were first observed and reported by George Enyeart of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department on an aerial survey of Lake Audubon October 13, 1971. The hybrid geese remained with a flock of about 400 large Canada geese, assumed to be the *maxima* subspecies, most of the time. They mixed readily with the Canada geese and seemed to be accepted as well as any of the geese. The four hybrid geese remained with the Canada geese on the refuge until December 5 when all the geese left the refuge.



FIGURE 1. Four Snow Goose-Canada Goose hybrids with Canada geese and Mallard ducks at goose pen, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge, November 1971.

The hybrid geese remained together at all times in close association. The impression I had from several observations was that the four hybrid geese were a family group. However, no Canada geese were seen with the four hybrids in a typical family group. Two snow geese remained with the flock of Canadas for a time, but they were never seen in close association with the four hybrids.

The geese were examined with a 20 power spotting scope from a distance of 200 yards. All four geese had white necks and heads. Their sides, backs and breasts were gray, shading into white through the belly and vent. There

was some gray striping vertically on the necks. Backs of the geese were a light gray color, except one goose which was white on the back with some gray and black spotting through the lower back and wings. Bills, legs and feet of the geese were a muddy, grayish pink; not the grayish green of immature snow geese nor the full pink color of adult geese. The geese had the small rounded head of snow geese. There were no black primaries visible in the wing in flight. The entire wing appeared to be a light gray color.

Four Canada goose—Blue goose hybrids were reported by H. K. Nelson (1952) from Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Columbia, South Dakota in the fall of 1950.

LITERATURE CITED

- Nelson, H. K. Hybridization of Canada geese with blue geese in the wild. *Auk*, 69: 425-428.