

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Anseriformes  
**Scientific Name:** Branta ruficollis

**Family:** Anatidae  
**Common Name:** Red-breasted Goose

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None

**Photo (Male):**



**Photo (Female):**



## NATURAL HISTORY:

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other Siberian Tundra

**Habitat:** Forest  Desert  Grassland  Coastal   
 Riverine  Montane  Other Tundra

**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other  Adults are very winter hardy so long as they have access to drinking water.

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other Above 90F provide shaded areas.

**Diet:** Frugivore  Carnivore  Piscivore  Insectivore   
 Nectivore  Omnivore  Folivore  Other (Add Below)

**Captive Dietary Needs:**

Captives can be fed various greens and Mazuri waterfowl maintenance/breeder.

**Life Expectancy in the Wild:** Males: Unknown Females: Unknown

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**Life Expectancy in Captivity:** Males: ~ 20 years Females: ~ 20 years

## BREEDING INFORMATION:

**Age at Sexual Maturity:** Males: 3 years Females: 3 years--\*some females will lay at two years old, though most start at 3.

**Courtship Displays:** Mutual head bobbing between males and females. Males will also puff up the mane on the back of their necks while rattling their wings.

**Nest Site Description:** Colony breeders with a preference for steep river banks, crags, and ravines of lowland tundra. In captivity this species will accept slatted boxes, hollow tree stumps, A-frame boxes with a partially concealed entrance, and natural nest sites behind rocks and vegetation.

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:** 6-9 White colored eggs. 64.8 mm x 46.3 mm (n=43). Fresh eggs are on average 72.4g.

**Incubation Period:** 23-26 Days

**Fledgling Period:** 35-42 days

**Parental Care:** Incubation is done by the female while the male remains near the nest site to defend the nest.

**Chick Development:** Goslings are dark brown on top and have a pale green/yellow stomach, forehead, nape, and wingtips. Chicks will leave the nest between 24-36 hours post hatch. They do well on Mazuri waterfowl starter and finely chopped greens, but their primary diet should be greens and grass from a few days of age going forward. Average hatch weight is 47.5g (n=29). Goslings are prone to gapeworm which can be treated with ivermectin. Coccidia is also a problem on occasion but easily treated. Red-breasted geese are excellent sitters and parents. Parent rearing is a safe option in a well-planted enclosure with plenty of grazing opportunities.

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

**Social Structure in the Wild:** Small colonies

**Social Structure in Captivity:** Pairs or small flocks

**Minimum Group Size:** 1.1

**Maximum Group Size:** Can be kept in flocks of multiple pairs.

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They are known to be aggressive amongst themselves, but are docile with other species.

In captivity, these geese have been found to be very compatible with many types of waterfowl including: dabbling ducks, whistling-ducks, perching-ducks, stiff-tailed ducks, shelducks, oddities and diving ducks.

**Compatible in  
Mixed Species Exhibits:**

Yes

**Comments:**

They are compatible with other types of birds such as passerines, pheasants, cranes, and wading birds.

This species can also be housed in a mixed-taxa exhibit. There is currently 1.1 housed with 1.1 White-cheeked Gibbons and 77 individuals from 25 different species of waterfowl at the Minnesota Zoo.

**Optimal Habitat Size:** If housed in smaller enclosures, they should be the only goose. Two pairs in 50' x 70' aviary with both pairs breeding. They do not need a lot of water but prefer to roost on it at night - particularly important in open enclosures where night time predators can take them off the land.

**Management Challenges:** Red-breasted geese can be difficult to breed in captivity. In the wild, these geese rely heavily on the presence of breeding peregrine falcons for nest site protection. There is also a greater reluctance among these geese to breed in North America due to light period differences from their arctic habitat. Red-breasted goose productivity increases with the presence of fresh grasses and small colonies of conspecifics. During breeding season, flocks can be left alone to settle territorial disputes, or be separated by bonded pairs to supplementary enclosures. This species is also prone to predation, specifically in open aviary settings, by other birds due to their small size.

Seem prone to West Nile Virus and heavy losses have been seen in some collections because of it.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Red-breasted geese are the most terrestrial of the northern geese. When kept in captivity, a firm grassy area should be provided. They are typically found on the terrestrial portion of exhibits, and are rarely found resting in water. When housing pinioned birds in open-topped exhibits, be considerate of available water for roosting at night due to predatory susceptibility on land. The flock tends to stay together until pairs start to venture off to nest.

Red-breasted geese are a vocal species with a distinct high-pitched, melodic call.

White millet can be provided in a water pan or grassy area for enrichment.

Ian Gereg at Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy was the first in North America to breed Red-breasted Goose in captivity.

## REFERENCES:

Delacour, Jean, and Peter Scott. *The Waterfowl of the World*. London: Country Life, 1974. Print.

Dunster, Jim. Zoo Miami. Personal communication. June 1, 2015.

Todd, Frank S. *Waterfowl: Ducks, Geese & Swans of the World*. San Diego, CA: Sea World, 1979. Print.

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