

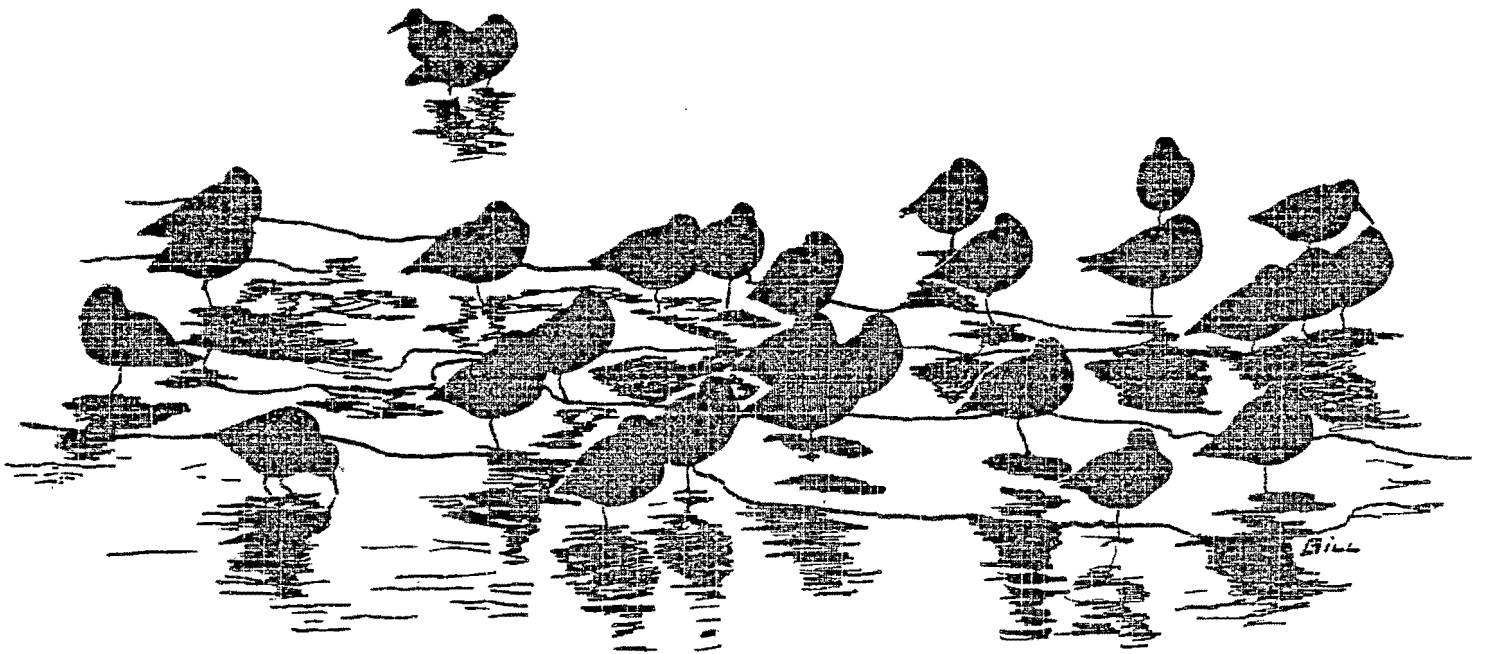
DUSKY CANADA GOOSE STATUS REPORT

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Abstract: The dusky canada goose (Branta canadensis occidentalis) provides wildlife biologists with a unique opportunity to study a population's response to a changing environment. Dusky Canada geese utilize a well-defined breeding area, have a limited wintering area, follow a consistent migration route, nest in habitats that are changing after natural perturbation and have been studied for over two decades. Mid-winter population estimates in Oregon since 1960 have ranged between 15,000 in 1962 and 1964 to 27,000 birds in 1974. With the exception of the incomplete 1982 mid-winter census which suggests a decline in numbers, the population has remained relatively constant at 22,000 to 25,000 since 1976. A decline in nest density and production on the Copper River Delta, Alaska may indicate a pending population decline. Nest densities in the historically productive habitats have dropped from 313 per square mile in 1978 to 48 per square mile in 1981. The low nest density in 1981 was reflected in low numbers of young (18%) and high number of adults in nonproducing flocks (92%) observed in the population during the July production survey. While recent production data do not present an encouraging picture, the situation on the wintering areas may be more favorable for Dusky survival. Increasing numbers of Taverner's Canada geese are wintering in Oregon and are apparently "buffering" the Dusky harvest.

Continuation of dusky goose studies on the Delta will not only provide the necessary monitoring to prevent over-harvesting, but also provide wildlife managers with valuable information on how migratory waterfowl populations respond to changing environmental conditions.

ALASKA MIGRATORY BIRD CONFERENCE



PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

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