

RECENT CHANGES IN PRODUCTION AND POPULATION TRENDS OF THE DUSKY CANADA GOOSE

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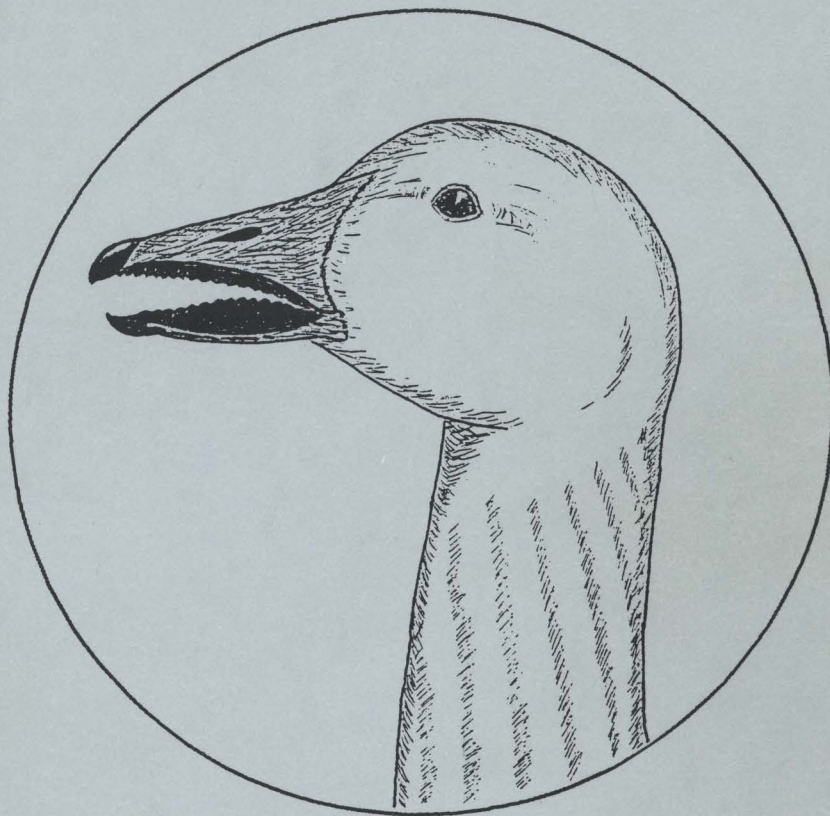
Between 1979 and 1989 the dusky Canada goose (*Branta canadensis occidentalis*) population declined from 25,500 to 11,700. This decline was attributed primarily to poor production on the nesting grounds where nest success averaged $21.5 \pm 17.6\%$ ($\bar{x} \pm SE$) between 1979 and 1989. Production was exceptionally poor between 1985 and 1989 when nest success averaging only $13.1 \pm 7.5\%$ and an average of $10.9 \pm 6.9\%$ of the fall population was young geese. Nest predation was the cause of poor production with brown bears and coyotes being responsible for from 54.1% to 83.7% of the nest destruction during the period. A simple model of the age structure of the dusky goose population in 1989 estimated that, due to the decade of poor production, over 75% of the birds exceeded 6 years of age. Nest predation by mammalian predators has declined the past 2 years. Nest success has averaged 47.8%, and young production has exceeded 20% both years. Under current harvest restrictions, the 1991-92 winter population could easily exceed 17,000 geese for the first time in a decade. While it is too soon to determine if changes in production are ephemeral, habitat conditions on the nesting grounds suggest they may not be. Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) activity has increased immensely. Much of the low laying habitat is now inundated and many alder/willow thickets have been cut or flooded out. While this limits nesting to more open, elevated areas that are more exposed to avian predators, large mammalian predators may be avoiding the area.

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