

Always Something New... by Cindy Williams, Photos by Cindy Williams and Kimberly Hess

I bet you think you know a Canada Goose when you see one. I sure thought I did. They are ubiquitous in our area in all seasons even though we commonly see them flying in formation during their fall and spring migrations. I've witnessed them floating placidly on lakes, converging on a harvested field at dusk, hanging out on the ice, being chased by working dogs at a golf course, swimming along a babbling creek – just about every natural setting is a framework for Canada Geese. I've captured them with fishing lines around their legs in parks, been pooped on by them when moving them from cage to swimming pool in rehab, held them while they were tubed and misted them when their wounds didn't allow them swim time. So yes, until today I thought I knew them pretty well. Just goes to show you what happens when you think.

Depending on what source you use there are upwards of seven different subspecies of Canada Geese under the species name *Branta Canadensis*. I'm not even going to try to list them all because (again, depending on the source) we could be talking about an Aleutian, Aleutian Cackling, Cackling, Richardson's Cackling – well, I think you get the picture. It's all very confusing. So let's just narrow it down to a conversation of three different kinds as described in our old copy of Sibley's Bird Guide. As you may have already guessed, we received what to my eye looks like a small version of a Common Canada Goose ("Common" being the designation for the ones we see most often). He was weak, had foul smelling fluid coming out of his mouth and nose, and was what we call – prepare yourself for a technical term – wonky, meaning he was disoriented and listing to one side. Most Commons are in the 4 – 5 Kilogram weight category (which is about 10 pounds). This little guy (or gal) is only 2 Kilograms, fully grown. That apparently was the clue to the staff that this was no common Common.

So now the question is, is this a Lesser Canada Goose or a Richardson's (Cackling) Goose? Based on weight alone, maybe it's a Richardson's – they average 2.3 Kilograms. But the Lesser averages around 2.75 Kilograms, so not too far off and this Goose came in thin and dehydrated. Take a look at the picture of our new friend – can you tell based on looks alone that this isn't the Canada Goose we all know and love? Pay special attention to the color of the breast and the length of the beak (which isn't easy to see in this picture). A Common Goose is large (4.5 K), has a very pale breast and a long bill. Here's where it gets tricky. The Lesser Goose is smaller than the Common, has a slightly darker but still pale breast and an intermediate sized bill. The Richardson's Goose is smaller still, has an even darker (but still pale) breast and a shorter bill. Wing span would also be a clue, but probably no more definitive than weight. A Common usually has a 60-inch wingspan, a Lesser 53 inches, and a Richardson's 47 inches. But we haven't taken that measure yet.



So....the jury is still out on whether or not this is a Lesser or a Richardson's subspecies of Canada Goose. Does it matter? Probably not, there would be no difference in treatment, feeding, or environment. The possible diagnosis is sour crop (the crop is the area at the base of the neck where food digestion begins and sour crop is an infection in that area). We will treat him for emaciation with Vitamin B and Iron, subcutaneous fluids and tube-feeding and treat the infection with Baytril. He was initially set up with a heat lamp and a donut (a rolled towel formed into a circle to support the chest and backside and allow the legs to rest under the body – you can see in the picture it looks like a little nest). On the day I saw him (only day 2) he was already

looking better and able to get a little swim time. Fingers crossed that he continues to improve and starts eating on his own and can eventually be released back into the wild to confuse us with identification again.

Coincidentally this Goose came to us from our neighbors, the Kansas City Zoo (not one of their exhibit animals, that's just where it was found). As it happens we recently transferred a Pelican to them to add to their menagerie of birds. Our American White Pelican broke a wing during its migration from possibly the Great Lakes to maybe the Gulf of Mexico – we can't be exactly sure, but that seems as good a guess as any. This sociable bird will unfortunately never fly again. Usually that means a bird must be put down since it cannot be returned to the wild but we know that there are sanctuaries that can and have taken Pelicans from us in the past. Turns out that the KC Zoo decided they could use a Pelican in their exhibit so once the wing healed and she was deemed healthy we sent her across the street to a new life as an ambassador for her breed. Once she's through with her quarantine you can expect to see her hanging out with the Flamingos or the Trumpeter Swans – be sure to watch for her on your next visit.



The last story I'll share is of a Coyote who was trapped by Independence Animal Control in a person's garage and brought to us in early December. She was extremely lethargic (as you can see in the first picture), had mange and, upon closer examination, appeared to have burns around her head. She was in very poor shape. She needed topical treatment around her face, drops for her eyes, and medication for infection and pain. For the first few days she received subcutaneous fluids and daily wound and eye treatment. Her breathing was very shallow and she wasn't eating, but the skin under the burns

looked viable and she managed to have a bowel movement which was a good sign. On the third day she managed to eat some dog food and her eyes started clearing up. Gradually, day after day, she started to eat more and more food, show some more spunk and slough off the old skin. By the end of the first week she was eating real food and getting more and more active, though the increased activity did highlight a hitch in her back left leg. The rest of her fur was starting to fill in as well. After only three weeks of intensive care it was deemed that she was ready to move outside and finish healing without being constantly exposed to humans (a very stressful situation for a Coyote).



Once she moved to the outside pen we didn't see much of her. She stayed in her doghouse all day and avoided all contact with us but continued to eat well and stay warm. Recently her caregivers decided that she needed a checkup to determine how well her fur had grown in so they pulled her out of the doghouse and snapped this picture of her. As you can see, she looks magnificent! Her fur has grown in tremendously (but still a little sparse) and her movement is great. The consensus was to give her a few more weeks and release her at the beginning of February. Hopefully by the time you read this Independence will have one more beautiful, wild creature back where she belongs. A wonderful success story!