

Bar-Headed Goose

Scientific Name: *Anser indicus*

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae



Overall length of this goose ranges from 27 to 30 inches, with a weight from 6 to 11 pounds. The body is pale brownish-gray, ending in a gray tail and long legs. The legs are yellow to yellow-orange. The narrow bill is the same color, and is practically straight. The name “bar-headed” derives from the two distinct horseshoe-shaped brownish-black horizontal bars on the head, one on the crown and the other extending from the eye. The sexes are alike. Juveniles have a pale gray head and neck with a dark brown line through the eyes, across the crown, and backwards down the neck.

Range

Central Asia, Burma, and India

Habitat

They inhabit marshy lakes and rocky outcrops at high elevations, up to 15,000 feet

Gestation

Incubation: 27 to 30 days

Litter

Clutch: 2 to 8 eggs; usually 4 to 6

Behavior

Unlike many geese, this bird feeds primarily at night or at dusk. It has been domesticated in parts of the Soviet Union and is easily kept in captivity. Incredibly, these geese have been seen flying over Mt. Everest at an altitude of 30,000 feet, where temperatures are well below freezing. Despite a substantially diminished amount of oxygen in such rarified air, Bar-headed Geese have been heard to honk or call during their high-altitude flights. One theory that has been advanced to explain such puzzling behavior suggests that the geese lived in the Himalayan area before the land was uplifted to such heights. Over eons of time the birds adapted. It is theorized that their calls may provide echolocation, giving them a determination of their altitude vis-à-vis the mountain peaks. They forage mainly on land, by grazing; also, on water. They are migratory, flying southward to winter in northern India and adjacent countries.

Reproduction

Breeding starts in late May or June. They gather in colonies and build a shallow nest of vegetation among marshes, on the ground, or in trees. Chicks have pale grayish-brown down above, and pale yellow below. Fledging is in approximately 53 days.

Wild Diet

Grasses and sedges, seeds of grasses, stems of green parts of plants, grains, tubers, seaweed