

# Snow Goose

*Chen caerulescens*

Watching huge flocks of Snow Geese swirl down from the sky, amid a cacophony of honking, is a little like standing inside a snow globe. These loud, white-and-black geese can cover the ground in a snowy blanket as they eat their way across fallow cornfields or wetlands. Among them, you might see a dark form with a white head—a color variant called the “Blue Goose.” Snow Geese have skyrocketed in numbers and are now among the most abundant waterfowl on the continent.

## Keys to Identification

### Size and Shape

A medium-sized goose with a hefty bill and long, thick neck. Juveniles are slightly smaller than adults in the fall, and this can be noticeable in flocks during fall and early winter.

### Color Pattern

The Snow Goose is a white-bodied goose with black wingtips that are barely visible on the ground but noticeable in flight. The pink bill has a dark line along it, often called a “grinning patch” or “black lips.” You may also see dark morph Snow Geese, or “Blue Geese,” with a white face, dark brown body, and white under the tail.

### Behavior

Snow Geese don't like to travel without the company of another couple dozen geese and can form flocks of several hundred thousand. Family groups forage together on wintering grounds, digging up roots and tubers from muddy fields and marshes. In flight, they are steady on the wing with even wingbeats.

### Habitat

Snow Geese adapted quickly to use agricultural fields, which is one reason their populations are doing so well. During winter and migration, look for them in plowed cornfields or wetlands. Also check lakes, ponds, and marshes where they roost and bathe along shorelines and in open water. Snow Geese breed on Arctic tundra.

## Cool Facts

- Snow Geese make epic journeys by air, but they are impressive on foot, too. Within the first three weeks of hatching, goslings may walk up to 50 miles with their parents from the nest to a more suitable brood-rearing area. Molting Snow Geese can outrun many predators.

## Measurements

### Both Sexes

- Length - 27.2 - 32.7 inches
- Wingspan - 54.3 inches
- Weight - 56.4 - 116.4 ounces

