

Biologists on Lookout—

Endangered Species

This fall biologists all along the Pacific Coast—from Alaska to California—are on the lookout for one of the world's rarest waterfowl wearing a brightly colored band.

The endangered Aleutian Canada Goose which nests only on remote Buldir Island in the western end of Alaska's Aleutian Chain is the subject of a major effort to increase its population through selective transplants.

Up until last winter, biologists only had guesses as to where the birds went after leaving Alaska. But marked birds were discovered in some areas of northern and central California. Canada goose hunting is restricted this season in some areas of California where the birds are known to visit.

This fall the major thrust of the project involving biologists from four states on both the state and federal levels will be the tracking of the entire population.

Vern Byrd, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Adak, and Dan Timm, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Anchorage, are the Alaskan members of the team.

Biologists from Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge spent this summer on tiny Buldir Island banding more of the birds.

One of the biologists who worked on the island this summer will attempt to follow the geese during their migration by checking on possible sightings.

Anyone sighting a small Canada goose wearing a yellow, light blue, orange, and green or white leg band approximately an inch and a half wide is urged to contact the Alaska Area Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 813 D Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99501 (907) 265-4868.

Other activities, all aimed at bringing populations of the geese up to where they might be removed from the endangered species list within 10 years, are underway in Alaska and at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service research facilities in Patuxent, Maryland, and Jamestown, North Dakota.

In 1963, some 18 goslings were captured on Buldir and used to create a captive flock which now provides birds to be transplanted back to the Aleutians. Holding pens are to be built before next summer somewhere in the islands in which the geese will be held until they reach maturity for release introduced to the islands by man during the fur-farming era.

A lack of natural enemies and an abundant supply of food, including the geese, led to burgeoning fox populations on most of the islands long after the fur-farmers gave up their operations.

The official recovery plan calls for a series of transplants and one is tentatively planned for next spring on Amchitka which is fox-free.

On any other islands, foxes will have to be removed before the Aleutian goose can nest safely on its former homeland.