

RARE GEESE ON CHAIN

Colorful geese are winging southward from Alaska wearing the latest in Aleutian fashions — green/yellow or blue/green plastic leg bands. Several are setting a new style trend with gray plastic neck collars. They are an endangered species, the Aleutian Canada goose.

Biologists of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service color marked these birds in hopes of monitoring the population — estimated at about 1,000 — and determining its migration route. Only two years ago bands helped trace these elusive geese to wintering sites in California. More of their secrets need to be learned to remove these birds from the endangered species list. Band sightings and/or bands reported to the Fish and Wildlife Service help add vital information to the recovery effort. Leg bands of orange, light blue, yellow, green, orange/green, and yellow/green also mark some of the birds.

The wild geese nest only on one tiny island near the Asian side of the 1,100-mile-long Aleutian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska. They used to breed on most of the islands until foxes introduced for fur-farming in the early 1900's wiped them out. No foxes were dropped off on Buldir Island, thus the geese had one sanctuary against extinction.