

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Anser albifrons

Other: White-fronted Goose (<1983)

A.a. frontalis or *albifrons*

A.a. gambelli?

non-breeding visitor, occasional winterer

Greater White-fronted Geese breed throughout arctic North America and northern Eurasia east to the Bering Sea, wintering in western N America from coastal British Columbia S to Baja California, central Mexico and other temperate regions including Japan and eastern China (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1952, Cramp and Simmons 1977, AOU 1998). In the Pacific these geese have been recorded as vagrants to Guadalupe I. off Baja California, Johnston Atoll (Dec 1993; [HRBP](#) 1037-1038), and, fairly regularly, to the Hawaiian Islands.

At least nine Greater White-fronted Geese have been recorded in the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands*. At *Kure*, the only record and the earliest fall arrival to the Hawaiian Islands was a juvenile that showed up 25 Sep 2009 and remained at least until 1 Oct ([HRBP](#) 5631, 5674). At *Midway*, a second hand report of two geese seen in 1922 (Wetmore *in* Olson 1996b, p. 43) was likely of this species, two were on Eastern I. in Dec 1962 of which one was collected (Fisher 1965, specimen not located), and individuals were photographed on Sand I. 20-21 Nov 1985 ([HRBP](#) 0462-0463) and in 2007-2008 (over-summered; [HRBP](#) 5413). One was observed on *Laysan* 3 May-20 Jun 1995 ([HRBP](#) 1080-1081) and another was reported during the 1999 Christmas Count. This species has had a hard time at *French Frigate*: three arrived on Tern I. 11 Oct 1990, one of which died and was saved (BYUH 3116), one of which was seen dead floating away from the island, and one of which disappeared; and another first-fall female that reached Tern I. in weakened condition died 10 Oct 1997 (fate of carcass unknown).

In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, a [minimum](#) of 102 individuals have been recorded: on *Kaua'i* (23 birds in 1994-2006; e.g., [HRBP](#) 1250, 5303, published *NAB* 60:592), *O'ahu* (31, 1956-2009; e.g., *E* 17:53, 23:51, Bikle 1982; 16 photographs in [HRBP](#), including 0155 published *E* 42:82), *Molokai* (20, 1895-2009; e.g., [HRBP](#) 5610; BPBM 7078; *E* 30:65, 118; 39:16), *Maui* (18, 1981-2008; e.g., *E* 22:19), and *Hawai'i* (10, 1891-2009; e.g., *E* 23:31, 45:71; [HRBP](#) 1041-1044, 5706). The first records were of two recorded by Palmer at Aimakapa Pond, Hawai'i, 18 Dec 1891 (Rothschild 1900), one of which (first-cycle male) was collected (AMNH 730680; [HRBP](#) 5292-5296 of specimen), and of one at Kaunakakai, Moloka'i 1 Mar 1895 (first-spring female, BPBM 7078). Birds often arrive in flocks; those of over 5 individuals include 6 at Hanalei NWR Kaua'i, 11 Nov 1994-27 Jan 1995 and 12-13 there 6 Oct-12 Dec 1995; 7 at Kii Unit, JCNWR, O'ahu on 22 Jan 1998 and 8 there 9 Dec 2009, and 9 at Kealia Pond NWR, Maui, 3 Nov-30 Dec 1990. The vast majority of birds include individuals arriving in the fall, spending the winter, and disappearing in the spring, with the earliest fall record being for 3 Oct (2009) of five birds on Moloka'i, and the latest spring departure being for 23 May (1981) at Ki'i. One first observed on Waiakea Pond, Hawai'i, 11 Jan 1986, took up residence (e.g., [HRBP](#) 5179), and was still present during 2009; this small tame bird has accompanied domestic ducks and geese during its tenure and its origin has thus been questioned.

The specimen collected at Aimakapa in 1891 was identified by Rothschild as *A.a. gambelli*, a larger subspecies from central North America, but this should be confirmed. Englis *et al.* (2004) reported that the specimens collected at French Frigate and on Moloka'i might be the nominate Eurasian subspecies *albifrons* based on wing and bill measurements; however, there is broad overlap in these characters with the smaller western North American subspecies *frontalis*, which breeds in the tundra of Alaska and migrates to southern California. The nominate subspecies might be expected at French Frigate Shoals but would not be expected on Moloka'i, where few Asian species of waterfowl have been recorded. We found the measurements and plumage of both of these specimens (BYUH 3116 and BPBM 7078) to be consistent with both *frontalis* and *albifrons* (PP examination).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>