

SNOW GOOSE

Chen caerulescens

non-breeding visitor, vagrant

C.c. caerulescens

The Snow Goose breeds in NE Siberia and throughout arctic North America and winters from Pacific coastal states S to n. Mexico, and in Japan and eastern China (Dement'ev and Gladkov 1952, AOU 1998). Stragglers have occurred in Europe (Cramp and Simmons 1977), the Marshall Is (Wiles 2005), and in the Hawaiian Islands, where they are not as common as other geese species. The Snow Goose is found in two distinct morphs; all records from Hawaii have been of white-morphed individuals.

A bird reported by naval personnel as the first returning Laysan Albatross of the season to Sand I., **Midway** 14 Oct-23 Dec 1983, turned out to be the only record of a Snow Goose for the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* (P. Pyle 1984; [HRBP](#) 0256, 0390, 0391, published *E* 44:107). There are substantiated records for 23 individuals in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, all of which presumably arrived in fall (earliest arrival 1 Oct) and variously remained into winter or spring (latest spring date early May), with a single over-summering record. On **Kaua'i**, two adults were observed flying near Hanalei, 21 Nov 1991, with one remaining to winter at Hanalei NWR through 27 Apr 1992, and another was present at Kawaiiele 19 Oct 06-26 Apr 07 ([HRBP](#) 5847-5849). On **O'ahu**, early records involved one at Hau'ula 8 Feb 1903 (presumably the bird mentioned by Perkins 1903) and three observed at Waimanalo 10 Oct 1904, one of which was collected (BPBM 3154 mounted). A first-winter bird was observed at Haleiwa 18 Oct 1958-20 Jan 1959 (*E* 19:36, 58; Udvardy 1961; *E* 21:80; a specimen, YPM 7765, possibly refers to his individual); one at Waipi'o Peninsula 9-10 Oct 1982 ([HRBP](#) 0190-0193, published *AB* 37:227) was observed dead 11 Oct (specimen could not be retrieved); and two first-year birds were Ki'i Unit of JCNWR, 20 Oct 1991-early May 1992 (*E* 52:21). An adult was observed at Kaunakakai, **Moloka'i** 1-12 Oct 1998 but not thereafter. A mounted specimen (present location unknown) was collected on **Maui** by Newell prior to 1893 (Rothschild 1900). Elsewhere on Maui, individuals were at Kanaha Pond early Nov-4 Dec 1941 (*E* 2:64) and 17 Nov-15 Dec 2009 and at Kealia Pond NWR 23 Nov 1966 (*E* 27:88, 28:5) and 4 Jan 2007-7 Mar 2008 (over-summering in 2007), and two were near Cape Kinau late Dec 1995-27 Jan 1996 (photo in local newspaper, [HRBP](#) 1082-1083,1085). Berger (1972, 1981) also mentions records from Maui from 1904, 1967, and 1970. On **Hawai'i I** a one was observed near Kea'au late Nov 1986-2 Apr 1987, and two were at Punalu'u 3-5 Dec 2009 ([HRBP](#) 5707, 5718).

The specimen from O'ahu (BPBM 3154), an adult male, was identified as a Greater Snow Goose (*C.c. atlanticus*) by Engilis et al. (2004) but measurements (wing chord 426 mm, tail 124 mm, exposed culmen 86 mm, tarsus 86 mm; PP) indicate male Lesser Snow Goose (*C. c. caerulescens*) of central and western North America (*cf.* Udvardy 1961, Pyle 2008). Greater Snow Goose breeds in ne. Canada and migrates to the mid-Atlantic N American coast and may not be the expected subspecies to reach the Hawaii, although a record has also been reported for Japan (Engilis *et al.* 2004). The bird on Midway appeared large but most photographs and descriptions from Hawaii suggest smaller birds, probably pertaining to the more expected Lesser Snow Goose. All records for the Hawaiian Islands have been of white-morph individuals.

[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/rfp-monograph/>