

# Orinoco Goose

*Neochen jubata*

Bird

## Scientific Name

*Neochen jubata*

## Other Names

None

## Range

South America, east of the Andes

## Habitat

Forest-covered banks of tropical rivers and damp clearings, wet savannas and muddy and sandy margins of large freshwater wetlands

## Description

A large goose with a pale neck and head, chestnut flanks, iridescent black wings and pink legs and feet.

## Average Size

Length: 24 – 30 in.

Weight: 1250 – 1400 g.

## Lifespan

In the wild: Estimated at 10+ years

In captivity: 20+ years

## Diet

In the wild: Grasses, succulent plants and invertebrates

In captivity: Prepared waterfowl chow and greens

## Incubation

30 days

## Sexual Maturity

2 – 3 years of age

## Clutch Size

6 – 10 eggs

## Predators

Birds of prey and small carnivores

## Population Status

Vulnerable



## Behavior

Although this species of goose is often seen perching in the trees, it is considered to be terrestrial (ground-dwelling). Individuals spend their days in pairs or small, family groups searching for succulent plants and mollusks in open areas along the banks of waterways. Despite their ability to forage for insect prey in the water, the Orinoco Goose is better suited to walking than swimming.

Unlike many other geese, Orinoco Geese rarely appear in large flocks (groups over 20 are unusual) and are not migratory. They are most often found grazing together with Capybara alongside the river's edge in close proximity with other waterfowl (excepting territorial issues associated with breeding season). As with most waterfowl, verbal communication is very important for their survival. Males make a high pitched call while the female makes softer cackling noises.

## Reproduction and Breeding

Breeding in the wild occurs in the winter months, most commonly in January, with birds becoming aggressive and territorial as they attempt to secure mates and keep away the competition. Courtship displays include ruffled feathers, wing lifting and repeated whistling vocalizations as well as a high degree of social preening. Pair-bonding is strong in this species, with mates remaining together for several years.

The female incubates the eggs alone in a down-lined nest made in the hollow of a tree. The male rejoins the family to closely guard the chicks after the eggs have hatched. Both parents assist with raising the offspring and the young are often seen with their parents a year or more after hatching.

## Conservation

Orinoco Geese were once the most abundant waterfowl visible in the Amazon and Orinoco Basins in South America. Unchecked hunting pressures and degradation of their rain forest and waterway habitats have drastically reduced the wild population and they are now classified as Near Threatened by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature). The abundance of the species on certain private reserves where it is well protected indicates that hunting is the primary reason for its decline. It is still locally common in certain areas and, with proper protection, would be much more abundant over its wide range.

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The Orinoco Goose Nestbox Project, in partnership with the Venezuelan Waterfowl Foundation and the Akron Zoo, works toward the conservation of the Andean river systems and the preservation of wild waterfowl in Venezuela, in particular the Torrent Duck and the Orinoco Goose. Goals include conducting awareness campaigns to discourage hunting and regulating the number of birds taken, and protecting significant areas of suitable forest and wetland habitat in a network of public and private reserves.

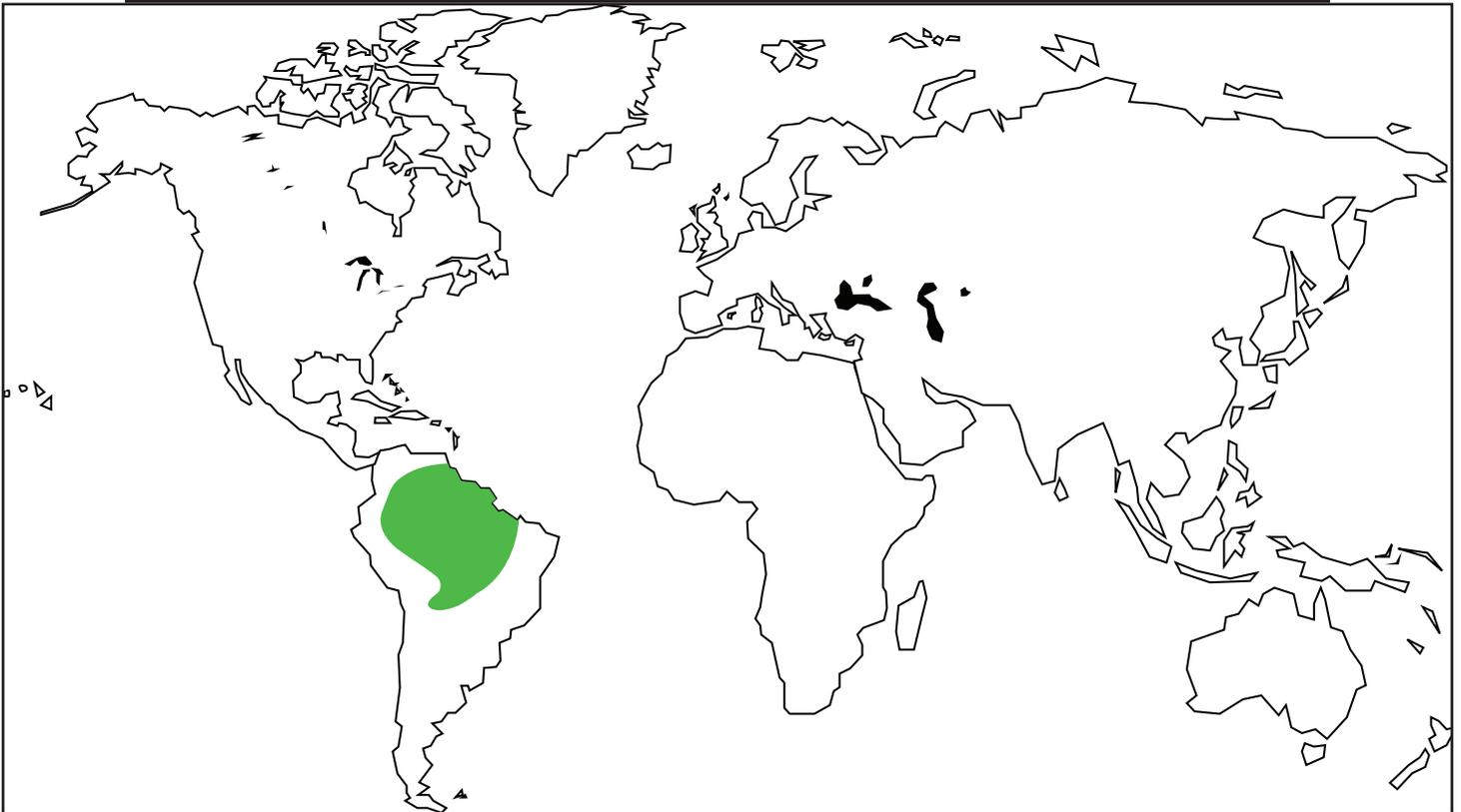
### **Amazing Facts**

This is the only true forest goose.

The current global population has been estimated at 10,000-25,000 mature individuals.

This bird is named for the Orinoco River in South America.

## **Orinoco Goose**



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