

## The Infinitive: Canada Geese

**READING  
TEXT**

They have a long black neck with a white mark on the cheeks, a black head and a brownish body. They are Canada geese, one of the most widely distributed water birds of North America. If you want to see one, you just have to go to any city park. Or look up in the sky in the spring and the fall to see the geese flying overhead.

Canada geese range in size from 56 to 121 cm long. They can weigh anywhere from 1.4 kg to 11kg. They have wing spans of up to 1.8 m. The male and female look similar, however the male is usually slightly larger.

The diet of Canada geese consists of a variety of plants like grass, clover, cattails, and bulrushes. They are also satisfied to eat berries, and in the fall, wheat and corn left over from the harvest. You will often see geese with their heads under water and their tails in the air. When you see this, they are trying to get food—roots, leaves, algae and pond weeds.

Canada geese like to build their nests on the ground near water. The nest is built with grass, twigs, bark, leaves and moss. The nest can be as big as a meter in diameter. The eggs are laid from March to June. There will typically be 5 or 6 eggs at a time. When the goslings hatch, parents are happy to share babysitting duty with each other. You will sometimes see one parent goose leading a group of goslings, with another parent at the end of the single file line. Not all of these goslings belong to those two parents.

Canada geese are well-known for their “V” flying formation during the spring and fall migrations. They migrate thousands of miles to find the best living conditions. They spend the winter in the northeast United States and summers in northern Canada. They travel during the day and night and use landmarks and the stars to navigate. Migration routes are passed on from parents to children.

Recently, however, the migration behaviour of the Canada goose has been evolving. Since the 1930’s, a large percentage of the inland Canada goose population has stopped migrating. Instead, the geese have made permanent homes for themselves in big city parks. In the 1930’s conservationists started to breed the birds, thinking that the birds were under threat of extinction. The birds were released into large city parks in New England and New York. The birds found that they enjoyed life in the parks because there was plenty of food. They started to stay in the parks

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year-round. Every year after that, some migrating birds met their sedentary city cousins. Some of these migratory and urban birds mated. Some of the new pairs and their goslings then stayed in the cities. As a result of this trend, the migratory Canada goose population continues to drop.

This change in migration patterns has had serious consequences. The traditional Canada goose hunt of the Inuit and Cree peoples of northern Quebec is threatened as fewer geese fly north. Hunting in the south has been severely restricted. And the ecosystems of northern Quebec and Chesapeake Bay are being affected by the reduced numbers of geese.

City residents think that the Canada geese are a nuisance in their new homes in city parks. There have been stories about geese attacking humans. And many people don't like walking in the goose droppings that decorate many park paths and grass. Many city dwellers think there are simply too many Canada geese around. City councils have frequent discussions about culling the birds to keep the population under control. Others, however, argue that the change in the migration patterns of Canada geese is simply an example of animal intelligence and adaptability. They think Canada geese are a modern example of Charles Darwin's theories on survival. As such, some people feel that the geese should simply be left alone, whether they migrate, or whether they permanently reside in North America's cities.

*Find all the examples of INFINITIVES in the reading. Why was an INFINITIVE used in each case?*

*Write a sentence with each of the following words and expressions.*

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|----|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | <b>WIDELY<br/>DISTRIBUTED</b> | _____ |
| 2. | <b>RANGE IN SIZE</b>          | _____ |
| 3. | <b>WING SPAN</b>              | _____ |
| 4. | <b>CONSISTS OF</b>            | _____ |
| 5. | <b>FORMATION</b>              | _____ |
| 6. | <b>TO NAVIGATE</b>            | _____ |
| 7. | <b>GOSLING</b>                | _____ |
| 8. | <b>ADAPTABILITY</b>           | _____ |

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|-----|------------------------|-------|
| 9.  | <b>SEDENTARY</b>       | _____ |
| 10. | <b>TO MATE</b>         | _____ |
| 11. | <b>EXTINCTION</b>      | _____ |
| 12. | <b>TO BREED</b>        | _____ |
| 13. | <b>TO EVOLVE</b>       | _____ |
| 14. | <b>CONSERVATIONIST</b> | _____ |
| 15. | <b>NUISANCE</b>        | _____ |
| 16. | <b>CULLING</b>         | _____ |

*Answer the following questions.*

1. What do Canada geese look like?  
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2. What do Canada geese eat?  
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3. Where are the geese’s summer grounds? Where are their winter grounds?  
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4. What do the geese use to navigate?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Why did the geese start to live in city parks year-round?  
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6. What are some of the consequences of the geese changing their migration behaviour?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Why do some city people think Canada geese are a nuisance?  
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8. What is one possible solution to the increasing number of geese in city parks? Do you agree or disagree with this solution?  
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9. Why do some people think the geese should simply be left alone?  
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