

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Anseriformes  
**Scientific Name:** Chloephaga melanoptera

**Family:** Anatidae  
**Common Name:** Andean Goose

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None

**Photo (Male):**



**Photo (Female):**



**NATURAL HISTORY:**

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Habitat:** Forest  Desert  Grassland  Coastal   
 Riverine  Montane  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other  Can be maintained outdoors as long as they have access to moving water to keep their feet from freezing

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other  Can be kept outdoors as long as water and shade are available

**Diet:** Frugivore  Carnivore  Piscivore  Insectivore   
 Nectivore  Omnivore  Folivore  Other (Add Below)

**Captive Dietary Needs:**

Captives can be fed commercial waterfowl diet, supplemented with greens

**Life Expectancy in the Wild:** Males: unknown Females: unknown

**Life Expectancy in Captivity:** Males: 10-15 years Females: 10-15 years

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## BREEDING INFORMATION:

**Age at Sexual Maturity:** Males: 18 Months Females: 18 Months

**Courtship Displays:** Females “incite” males to attack rivals by calling rapidly and walking around the male; in males, the primary sexual display involves puffing up the chest and walking very erect. Breeding often takes place in shallow water.

**Nest Site Description:** Scrape on ground, usually near water. Captives may lay eggs in nest boxes.

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:** 5-10 cream-colored eggs, measuring 7.5 x 5 centimeters and weighing approximately 110-130 grams

**Incubation Period:** 28-32 Days

**Fledgling Period:** 80-90 Days

**Parental Care:** Eggs are incubated entirely by the female, while the male stands guard. Both parents care for the young until they have fledged.

**Chick Development:** Hatchlings are precocial. Their downy plumage is striped; they become fully-feathered at 3 months of age. Shortly after hatching, they are often led to the water by their parents.

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

**Social Structure in the Wild:** Small Flocks, Pairs in the nesting season

**Social Structure in Captivity:** Small Flocks

**Minimum Group Size:** Pair

**Maximum Group Size:** Small Flock

**Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits:** Yes **Comments:** The species has a reputation for aggression, especially males during the breeding season. That being said, it has been successfully housed in mixed-exhibits with other waterfowl, as well as South American camelids and Patagonian caviés.

**Optimal Habitat Size:** 200 Square Feet Per Pair

**Management Challenges:** Andean geese can behave aggressively towards exhibit-mates, especially during the breeding season. Due to their fondness for grazing in wet areas, Andean geese may be more susceptible to parasites. Andean geese are more terrestrial than many waterfowl species, and benefit from enclosures with more land areas than other ducks and geese. Because of their size, Andean geese are often maintained in open-air, outdoor enclosures instead of enclosed aviaries. Their pools and food sources tend to attract native wild birds, such as Canada geese and mallards, which become potential disease vectors and competitors for food.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

As implied by their common name, Andean geese are found in the Andes Mountains of western South America, where they are present well above 3000 meters (small scale altitudinal shifts may occur over the course of the year). They are

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most often associated in short-grasslands near lakes and lagoons. Though they are often found close to bodies of water, they are predominately terrestrial, and usually only take to the water to escape danger. They are poor swimmers; when seen swimming, the breast is low in the water, the rump is held high, and progress is slow and awkward. The species is poorly studied in the wild, but it is believed to be predominately a grazer, as are the other *Chloephaga* species.

Andean geese are sexually monomorphic, with both males and females being predominately white with black wings and tails, sometimes with a purple metallic sheen. The small, slightly-hooked beak is flesh-colored (with a black tip), as are the feet. The sexes are most easily distinguished through vocalization; they voice of the male is a high-pitched whistle, while the female's call is a lower-pitched cackle. The sexes also differ in size, with the males being slightly larger than the females. Immature birds look similar to the adults, but tend to be duller, both in the white portions of their plumage (which appear greyer) and the black (which appear browner). Adults measure 70-80 centimeters long with a wingspan of 140-160 centimeters; body weight is 2.7-3.6 kilograms. No subspecies are described.

Andean geese are relatively uncommon in zoo collections, being better represented in European collections. They are hardy birds; their main drawback as a collection animal is the aggression which they can display towards exhibit-mates during the breeding season. Found over a large geographic range, the Andean goose does not appear to be in danger in the wild; the species is listed as being of Least Concern by the IUCN, and is not listed under CITES. They are sometimes hunted by humans, but their flesh is described as being tough and distasteful. The habitat is remote and relatively unused by humans. The wild population is estimated at between 25,000 and 100,000 individuals.

## REFERENCES:

Duvall, Abigail. 2010. Andean Goose (*Chloephaga melanoptera*), Neotropical Birds Online (T. S. Schulenberg, Editor). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; retrieved from Neotropical Birds Online: [http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p\\_p\\_spp=66311](http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=66311)

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## COMPLETED BY:

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