

Why do I always see so many does but rarely any bucks? Also, where did all the Canadian Geese come from? I have been coming to the park for a long time but never saw so many.

At this time of year (late summer) the male deer (bucks) have established harems (groups of females which they protect and control).

There are many large groups of deer composed mostly of females which are guarded by a single dominant buck. Occasionally mixed into these groups will be younger males who may or may not have visible antlers whose presence is tolerated because the dominant male does not feel they are a threat. When he feels the younger males are a threat he will chase them away, he also spends a great deal of his time chasing away other males.

It is very common to see fairly large groups (over a half dozen) of females and only one male.

On the other side of the coin the males who have not established dominance and formed a harem will band together in bachelor herds. It is also fairly common to see groups of males peacefully coexisting this time of the year; when I opened the park this morning there was a group of 5 bachelor males grazing in the Orchard Glen picnic area.

Mixed herds and bachelor herds form for the same main reason: if you are a prey species, a larger group has more eyes to look around and spot danger – there is safety in numbers.

The Canada Geese are migratory waterfowl, at two times each year (spring and fall) they form flocks and move from either their breeding grounds to their summer home or the other way around. Sometimes flocks are small, only a few members, sometimes quite large (I counted 48 geese on the turf next to Boronda Lake last week).

Depending on many factors (food availability, weather, presence of predators among them) flocks may form earlier or later in the season.

During other times of the year you may see only one or two together or sometimes a family group of two adults and up to a dozen goslings. Canada Geese breed all across North America from the Arctic as far south as the San Francisco bay area. After the goslings have grown flight feathers and are large enough to fly, their parents take them south, sometimes as far south as southern Mexico. The young geese learn the migratory route from their parents and fly the same route year after year, in turn teaching it to their young.