
The Triumph Ceremony of the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser* L

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Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. B 1966 **251**, 477

doi: 10.1098/rstb.1966.0038

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The triumph ceremony of the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser* L.

BY K. Z. LORENZ, FOR.MEM. R.S.

[Plate 25]

The triumph ceremony of the Greylag Goose serves the double function of holding together a group, in most cases a pair or a family group, and in setting it off, as an independent entity, against other, equivalent groups of conspecifics. The ceremony consists of two subsequent parts, first, the gander's real or feigned attack on a conspecific, accompanied by a characteristic sound utterance called 'rolling', and secondly, his return to his mate, during which the rolling subsides and merges into a low-pitched polysyllabic cackling. The attitude of the gander during rolling is that of a display motivated both by aggression and escape drive, the breast is protruded and the neck stretched obliquely upward with the bill opened. The cackling which also occurs as an independent instinctive motor pattern which, though phylogenetically derived from a re-directed threat, has attained full autonomy by its high degree of ritualization. It still retains the motor coordinations as well as the orientation of re-directed threat: the neck postures of both partners indulging in the greeting ceremony are identical with that of a threatening goose, but so oriented as to point past the partner. At the climax of cackling, the necks of the mates are very often crossed. In the greylag, the sequence of first rolling and then cackling is only slightly ritualized, the linkage for the two motor patterns is evident only at a very high level of excitation. This happens particularly when the gander has been victorious in real fight with a conspecific. In this case rolling with the neck stretched obliquely upward may persist even after he has returned to his female or his family group and, after having begun to cackle with his neck stretched forward low over the ground, he may relapse into the attitude and sound utterances of rolling and repeat this process several times. In other goose species, for instance in the Whitefront, a quick alternation of rolling and cackling with corresponding up and down movements of the head has become a fixed ritual.

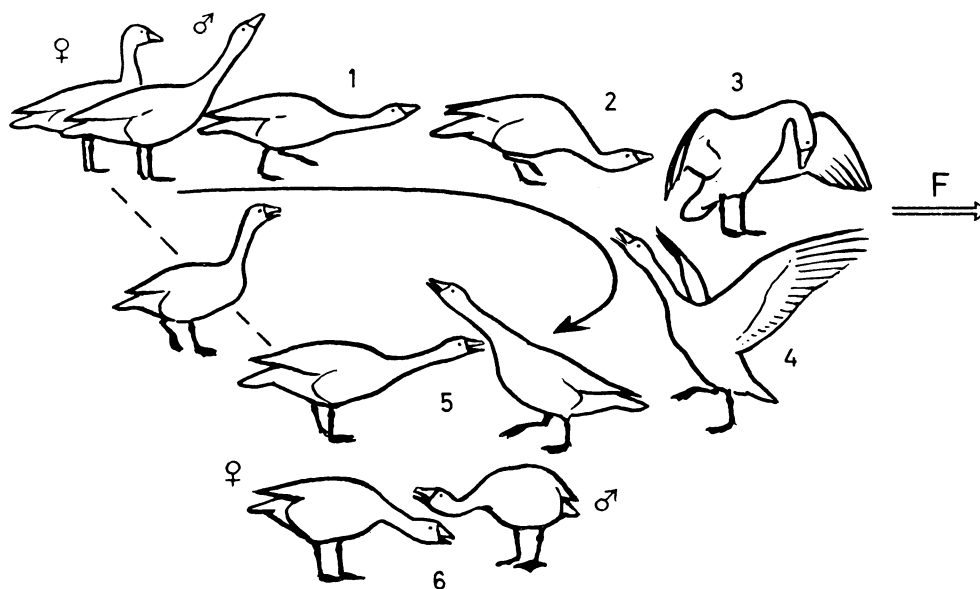


FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

(Facing p. 478)

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FIGURE 2