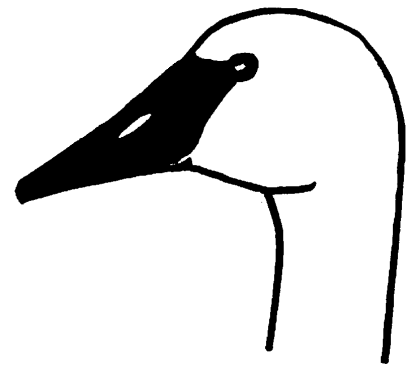




TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society
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TRUMPETER SWAN MIGRATION Y2Y PROJECT CONTINUES - TTSS is thrilled to announce that for a second year, the Yellowstone to Yukon Science Grant Program and Wilburforce Foundation provided major funding for our efforts to identify the migration routes and wintering sites of western Canadian Trumpeter Swans. Ducks Unlimited, Canada, will also be assisting the project this year. Using radios tracked by Argos satellites, we are hoping to determine whether all of the swans are wintering in the Greater Yellowstone region or if some birds are dispersing to other undetected wintering sites. This year's research will also help managers assess the meaningfulness of the administrative boundary that currently delineates the summer ranges of the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain management populations. Rod Drewien (TTSS), Bruce Conant (USFWS), and Andre Breault, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) will deploy eight additional radios on swans in the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia between 20-28 July. Plans also call for putting conventional neckbands on additional swans that may be captured during the molt. Genetic samples will be taken from all captured swans.

In the summer of 2002, TTSS, in cooperation with the USFWS and CWS, marked 15 Trumpeter Swans in the Yukon Territory, including five marked with satellite-tracked radios and 10 with neckbands. Genetic samples were also taken from all. Thirteen of the swans were relocated in eastern Idaho during winter 2002-03, including four with satellite-radios and nine with neckbands. The two missing swans included a radioed swan that died during fall migration after striking a powerline near Helena, Montana, and one neckbanded swan. The radioed swans all arrived in the Tri-state Area between 26 October and 17 November after migrating east of the Rockies through Alberta and Montana. Duration of fall migration ranged from 15-40 days. The location of the migration corridor was consistent with previous neck-banding data. Its narrowness, however, was noteworthy, given that swans had been captured at widely scattered locations in the Yukon in an attempt to maximize behavioral diversity.

Swans showed very little winter movement after arriving in eastern Idaho. Although they shared the wintering area with swans from the Tri-state nesting population, all marked western Canadian swans remained with their mates throughout the winter and migrated back in spring to the same Yukon areas where they had been captured. Spring migration routes were very similar to fall migration routes. For three swans with adequate data, duration of spring migration ranged from 24-30 days. All radioed swans arrived back at their 2002 capture areas in the Yukon between 24 April and 14 May.

NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE - The second draft for the 2003 revision of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan is available on the web at <http://northamerican.fws.gov/NAWMP/2003nawmpdraft.htm>

TTSS Staff and Directors will be preparing comments on the swan section on behalf of TTSS. TTSS members might wish to read the swan population objectives and status that are covered on pages 35-37 of the document. Comments must be submitted by August 31. It is expected that the final draft will be completed in the fall of 2003.

NO SUBSISTENCE HUNT FOR ALASKAN TRUMPETER SWANS - A proposal to legalize the spring and summer subsistence hunting of almost all species of birds in Alaska will be adopted by the USFWS. All residents of certain rural areas would be able to participate. However, TTSS has learned that USFWS has proposed to exempt Trumpeter Swans from the list of huntable species.

IDAHO NESTING UPDATE - The Trumpeter Swan Society is once again monitoring swan nesting territories in most of eastern Idaho, with funding provided by the US Forest Service and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). USFWS Southeast Idaho Refuge Complex has taken the lead on monitoring at Grays Lake, Bear Lake, and Camas National Wildlife Refuges.

Ruth Shea, with assistance from Rod Drewien and Lauri Hanauska-Brown (IDFG), flew three aerial surveys (21 May, 12 June and 26 June) to document territory occupancy and hatching success. Aerial data were augmented by ground observations. For all of Idaho, 20 active nests were located, compared to 17 in 2002, and about 38 cygnets hatched, compared to 26 in 2002. In addition, USFWS salvaged 20 eggs from five nests at Grays Lake NWR because low water would have prevented successful fledging. The cygnets from these eggs are currently being raised by the Wyoming Wetland Society, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and will eventually be released at Bear Lake NWR in southeast Idaho. Sixteen eggs that failed to hatch were also collected from nests in Island Park and will be made available to Dr. Sara Oyler-McCance, University of Denver, who is conducting genetic studies (see note below) funded by the USFWS.

TRUMPETER SWAN GENETIC STUDIES PROJECT – Dr. Sara Oyler-McCance of the U. S. Geological Survey at the University of Denver is conducting studies for a comparison of all the Trumpeter Swan populations using nuclear and mitochondrial genetic markers. One of the project's goals is to create a database of the genetic makeup of groups of Trumpeter Swans throughout North America.

In the summer of 2002, the project received Trumpeter Swan blood samples from captive flocks in Wyoming and from Trumpeter Swans in the Yukon Territory. Several methods of DNA extraction have been tried and an extraction technique for swan blood has been optimized. A new graduate student, Leah Berkman, will begin work on the Trumpeter Swan project in September 2003. The project has been coordinating the collection of genetic samples by contacting swan biologists. Bill Long, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, assisted in the development of a protocol for blood collection in the field. Sampling kits and data sheets have been sent to biologists who have agreed to collect samples for this study. Dr. Oyler-McCance can be contacted at soyler@du.edu or (303) 871-3535.

ALBERTA'S TRUMPETER SWAN RECOVERY TEAM -Trumpeter Swans are classified as "threatened" in Alberta and the Province has begun to prepare a Provincial Recovery Plan for the species. In April 2003, the Alberta Trumpeter Swan Recovery Team was initiated. Team members include representatives from federal and provincial agencies, universities, industry, and conservation groups, including TTSS. The team will recommend a Recovery Plan to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development that identifies goals, objectives, strategies and actions to improve the status of Trumpeter Swans in Alberta. They will also oversee the implementation of the Recovery Plan and evaluate the implementation and results. The recovery team is working toward a draft plan in the early fall of 2003. For more information, contact Lyle Fullerton, Information Officer, Fish and Wildlife Management, Sustainable Resource Development (e-mail: Lyle.Fullerton@gov.ab.ca)

TRUMPETER SWAN WINTER SURVEY OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN POPULATION – Following is an abstract prepared by James A. Dubovsky, Wildlife Biologist with the USFWS Migratory Birds and State Programs, dated 29 May 2003. For a copy of the complete report, you may contact the TTSS office or the USFWS, Migratory Birds and State Programs, Mountain Prairie Region, P. O. Box 25486, Denver CO 80225-0486.

Observers counted 3,974 swans (white birds and cygnets) in the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeter Swans during February 2003, a decrease of 10% from the 4,415 counted in February 2002. The number of white birds (3,427) declined 11% from that of last year, while the number of cygnets (547) was essentially unchanged from the count last year (553). In the Tri-state area, the decline in total swans was much greater in Montana (-38%) than in Idaho (-4%) or Wyoming (-11%). The number of birds wintering in areas near restoration flocks was similar to counts in recent years. Drought conditions persisted in much of the Tri-state area. Reservoir levels in early February were some of the lowest recorded during early February. Weather during winter 2002-03 was relatively mild throughout the region.

NEWS FROM THE INTERIOR POPULATION

IOWA DNR CLOSE TO ITS RESTORATION GOAL - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is elated to relay the fact that it has reached its goal of 15 pairs of wild nesting Trumpeter Swans by 2003. We have 13 known nest attempts within the Iowa borders plus two Iowa-banded pairs nesting on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River. Iowa had five new nesting pairs this year. Two

Iowa-banded swans that migrated to Lubbock, Texas, for the winter returned to NW Iowa this spring. The Project's new goal is 25 nesting pairs by 2006. So far, our biggest challenge remains reducing the illegal poaching of swans. Interestingly enough, despite our high mortality, we are gaining some momentum with our project to date. Being realists, we expect some setbacks, but it looks like Trumpeters will once again grace the skies and landscape of Iowa after a 120-year hiatus.

Iowa biologists are reviewing the possibilities of reducing rough fish, primarily carp, in wetlands to improve them not only for swans, but to "trumpet their cause" for water quality as well. Rough fish stir up the sediments in shallow areas, releasing high loads of phosphorous and other nutrients. The result is more frequent algae blooms and green water and a loss of aquatic vegetation. I still believe that the most important component of our Trumpeter Swan restoration effort is the many partners and their powerful passion to help the DNR bring back the Trumpeters to Iowa and the Midwest.

Ron Andrews, Iowa Trumpeter Swan
Restoration Coordinator

FROM ONTARIO - Harry Lumsden, Coordinator of Trumpeter Swan restoration in Ontario, notes that in 2003, Ontario had a record hatch of 78 cygnets. It is expected that additional broods will be detected when the swans migrate to their traditional wintering sites. The release of 2-year-old captive Trumpeters is complete for 2003. Fifty-two swans were placed on seven sites in eastern Ontario. The Ontario population of Trumpeter Swans now numbers about 400 birds. The goal is to establish a wild population of 500 swans by 2006. Trumpeter restoration in the province of Ontario is privately funded and relies on strong support from private propagators. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and local media work hard to educate the public about Trumpeter restoration in Ontario.

FROM MINNESOTA - The Minnesota DNR Nongame program released 10 Trumpeter Swans on May 17 at Wolf Lake east of Windom, Cottonwood County, in southern Minnesota in celebration of "Wings on the Prairie" Day. This was the ninth release sponsored by the North Heron Lake Game Producers and the Heron Lake Watershed District. Prior to release, the birds were cared for by Three Rivers Park District, Maple Plain, Minnesota, and the Minnesota Zoo. The area north of the Iowa border is the only area where Trumpeters are still being released in Minnesota. Three Rivers Park District, formerly Hennepin Parks, has a record 11 nesting pairs within its park district lands. Except for two pairs that hatched six

cygnets, most broods were smaller than usual, perhaps due to a cool and wet spring.

FROM OHIO - Dave Sherman reports that, as of July, there are 13 known pairs of nesting Trumpeters in Ohio. Ten of the nests hatched out 39 cygnets, including two broods of eight.

WISCONSIN AND MICHIGAN TRUMPETERS MIX - A report from Brian Bogaczyk, wildlife biologist on the Ottawa National Forest in Bessemer, Michigan, confirmed a successful nesting of Trumpeters on a beaver flowage on Iris Creek. A pair with two cygnets was observed in July and likely represents the first Trumpeter nesting in this area of Northwest Michigan in many decades. The male, collared H51, is a Wisconsin-banded bird according to Pat Manthey of the Wisconsin DNR. Further, Pat reported a Michigan-banded male, 40E, and mate are now raising five cygnets on Totogatic Lake in northern Wisconsin, near Hayward. Joe Johnson of the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary, Michigan State University, where 40E was hatched in 1999, says the mixing of Michigan and Wisconsin swans is the beginnings of a metapopulation.

MUTE SWAN DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT - On July 2, 2003, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a draft environmental assessment for the management of Mute Swans in the Atlantic flyway. The U. S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled in December 2001 that the Mute Swan comes under the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Because of this ruling, the USFWS is working closely with wildlife managers to prepare a flyway wide management plan as it has done for most other waterfowl species. Mute Swans were introduced or escaped from captivity in the early 1900s and have since grown in numbers to an estimated population of 14,313 Mute Swans on the Atlantic Coast. To read the full USFWS press release, go to <http://news.fws.gov/newsreleases/default.cfm>

LET'S GET THE LEAD OUT! CAMPAIGN IN MINNESOTA - The Minnesota DNR Nongame Program is working to educate anglers about the dangers of fishing tackle and lead poisoning. Minnesota has a population of 12,000 Loons and a population of approximately 1,500 Trumpeters. Anglers can make the choice to use the safer options of sinkers and jigs made from tin, bismuth, steel, and recycled glass. Loons have been documented to die of lead poisoning caused by lead sinkers or jigs. Even one lead sinker can kill a Loon. In 2000, New Hampshire, concerned about the mortality of Loons within its state, banned lead fishing sinkers and jigs that weigh less than an ounce and are smaller than 1 inch. Maine has also

enacted restrictions. Lead sinkers are banned in Yellowstone National Park and a number of USFWS wildlife refuges. Great Britain banned the use of lead sinkers in 1987. Lead poisoning, especially from spent lead shot is still a major source of mortality for Trumpeter Swans in the Midwest as well as in the Pacific Northwest. Audubon Minnesota is hosting several lead sinker exchange events where anglers can turn over lead sinkers in exchange for nontoxic alternatives. Visit www.dnr.state.mn.us or www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/mayjun03 for more details. On a related note, swan monitors have reported swans tangled up with fishing line and/or lures. It is important that we educate the public about the hazards of fishing gear discarded into our wetlands.

CONSERVATION THROUGH BIRDING - (CTB) is a new initiative dedicated to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats through the recreation of birding. You might want to visit their web site at www.conservationthroughbirding.org to learn more about their goals and activities to promote birds. The group has a Conservation Through Birding Summit planned for September 11, 2003, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The Summit is co-hosted by the Midwest Birding Symposium and Wisconsin DNR with financial support from FERMATA, Inc. and the USFWS Region 3. The TTSS office often receives inquiries from the birding public (even from tourists as far away as Paris!) interested in locations for viewing Trumpeter Swans.

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WELCOME ALL!

TRUMPETERS WANTED – The TTSS office has had a number of requests for Trumpeters, mainly to replace lost mates, from members and from other waterfowl hobbyists who find us on the Web. So, if you have birds to sell or swap, please do let us know by e-mail, snail mail or a call.

REPRINTS AVAILABLE- If you would like a copy of *Restoration of Trumpeter Swans: A Century of Progress and Challenges* by R. E. Shea, H. K. Nelson, L. N. Gillette, J. G. King, and D. K. Weaver from *Waterbirds* 25 (Special Publication 1) 2002, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the

Visit TTSS' World Wide Web site at www.taiga.net/swans/index.html