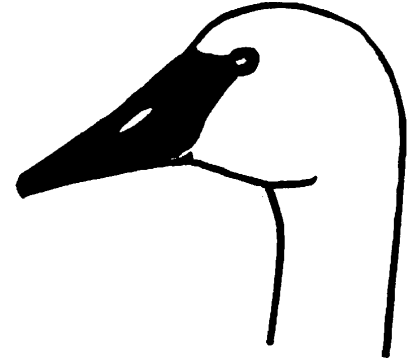


TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society
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UPDATE ON THE RMP – On March 3, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) concerning RMP management and future hunting of Trumpeter and Tundra Swans in the Pacific Flyway. The draft EA proposes to permanently authorize a hunting season on Trumpeter Swans in the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) and evaluates the impacts of various alternatives. TTSS can not support the USFWS' preferred alternative and will be working to ensure that a more appropriate management alternative, one that will accomplish RMP population and distribution objectives, is selected.

The final EA will set future management direction to replace the 5-year experiment that USFWS authorized for the 1995-99 hunting seasons, which has now expired. That experiment temporarily reduced the season length and area open to Tundra Swan hunting in Montana, Nevada, and Utah. It also protected hunters who shot trumpeters by authorizing the first legal harvest of trumpeters since passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. TTSS and other groups reluctantly agreed not to object because a limited harvest of trumpeters was presented as a necessary component of an overall management package that would finally allow Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and other key habitats in Utah and southeast Idaho to be used in efforts to restore a more secure distribution of RMP trumpeters.

Unfortunately, much of the package was never implemented, and the experiment failed to benefit trumpeter range expansion. Instead, it merely authorized harvest of the very few trumpeters that migrate south from Idaho. The precarious concentration of trumpeters wintering in eastern Idaho has worsened and nesting trumpeters of the Greater Yellowstone region are near a 50-year low. Supplemental feeding at Red Rock Lakes NWR has been terminated, and agencies continue to haze swans from high-risk wintering sites in eastern Idaho. Despite all this, efforts to restore trumpeter use of historic habitat in southern Idaho and northern Utah continue to be impeded due to concerns about potential conflicts with tundra hunting.

During the next experimental period, TTSS believes that the EA must ensure a solid USFWS commitment to expand RMP distribution southward and to ensure that

USFWS swan hunts will not continue to impede restoration efforts, especially on National Wildlife Refuges. TTSS had requested that USFWS seek broad public involvement and conduct scoping to ensure that major issues and concerns would be clearly identified and addressed by the EA, and used to develop and evaluate alternatives. However, the draft EA has been completed without scoping and public involvement may be limited to commenting on the draft. An announcement will be released shortly in the Federal Register for a 60-day public comment period and possible public hearings. You can obtain a copy of the EA and request opportunity to comment by contacting Robert Trost, USFWS, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Portland, OR at 503-231-6162; (or robert_trost@fws.gov).

CONGRATULATIONS TO JIM KING - The Trumpeter Swan Society congratulates Jim King, TTSS Director, on receiving the Pete Isleib Award in Avian Conservation. The 8th Alaska Bird Conference recently contributed \$500 in Jim's name to the North American Swan Fund that Jim helped established. The donation was in appreciation for Jim's many contributions to the study, management, and conservation of Trumpeter Swans and other species of Alaska birds throughout his distinguished career. Jim led the way for statewide aerial censuses of trumpeters and inspired and contributed to the completion of the Alaska Trumpeter Swan Atlas.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SWAN SYMPOSIUM – The 4th International Swan Symposium will be held at the Airlie Environmental Center, Airlie, Virginia, from 13-18 February 2001. The International Swan Symposia, held every 10 years, provides a forum for members of the Swan Specialist Group and other interested parties to discuss the most recent results of swan research. Papers and posters on population trends and distribution, population ecology, habitat selection, feeding ecology, genetics, physiology, migration, behavior and conservation will be presented. Abstracts should be submitted for consideration by August 31, 2000, to Eileen Rees, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Martin Mere, Bursough, nr. Ormskirk, Lancashire, UK L40 0TA. TTSS will hold its 18th Conference in conjunction with this international meeting. Details of the TTSS Conference will follow in the next *Trumpetings*.

HIGH PLAINS TRUMPETER SWAN FLOCK UPDATE - Rolf Kraft, Manager of Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge in Martin, South Dakota, reports that a total of 374 Trumpeter Swans, including 80 cygnets, was observed during the mid-winter aerial survey on January 21, 2000. This number compares to 455 trumpeters, including 101 cygnets observed in January 1999. Although the 2000 survey indicates a decrease from 1999, this past winter has been very mild and many wetlands in the Nebraska Sandhills remained open. It is believed that a number of swans were dispersed on these open waters and missed during the survey. Most of the High Plains Flock now winters in Nebraska.

The late summer 1999 aerial production survey recorded a total of 311 trumpeters including 69 nesting pairs, 36 broods with 105 cygnets and 60 non-breeders in 12 flocks. These figures compare to a total of 298 trumpeters including 62 nesting pairs, 35 broods with 91 cygnets and 48 non-breeders in nine flocks in 1998. The surveys of the past several years indicate an expanding population, primarily in the Nebraska Sandhills while the refuge swan production has declined to almost nothing. [For a complete report, please contact Rolf at Lacreek NWR, HC 5 Box 114, Martin, SD 57551]

LEAD POISONING SUSPECTED IN WASHINGTON - More than 60 Trumpeter Swans found dead in January northeast of Bellingham appear to have succumbed to lead poisoning, according to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) wildlife biologists.

The dead birds are among a wintering population of about 1,000 Trumpeter Swans in Whatcom County. Another several thousand swans are present in winter months in Skagit County. All the dead swans have been examined and show signs of lead poisoning, said Mike Davison, WDFW district wildlife biologist. Several also have been x-rayed, revealing lead shot in their gizzards.

Although the source of the lead has not been confirmed, the swans may have been poisoned by ingesting lead shotgun pellets found on lake bottoms and the ground, said Lora Leschner, regional wildlife manager in WDFW's North Puget Sound regional office in Mill Creek. Lead shot has been illegal for waterfowl hunting in western Washington since 1986 and nationally since 1991. The dead swans were collected promptly so that Bald Eagles would not feed on the swan carcasses and suffer secondary poisoning. [Summarized from a February 1, 2000, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife News Release.]

NEWS FROM WYOMING - Bill Long reports that captive swans are starting to court as mild weather continues to dominate Wyoming. The Trumpeter Swan Fund, which releases birds in Wyoming, under the guidance of Wyoming Game and Fish, is gearing up with 10 captive pairs this spring. The Wyoming program has some birds for trade: (4) 1999 Hatch Year; (6) 1998HY; (1) 1997HY; and (1) 1996. All are pinioned birds. Genetics are not critical, but the program would like birds from breeders other than Elgas of Montana, Lowe stock and from the original Brown Thomas birds out of Cody. Of particular

interest are swans from known Red Rock Lakes stock. Anyone interested in trading should send an e-mail to Bill at whitewing55@aol.com.

SWAN NEWS FROM MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA - Trumpeter Swans are considered an endangered species by both the State of Michigan and the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. Their presence in Michigan's western Upper Peninsula hasn't been evident for over 100 years. In 1998, the Keweenaw Bay Natural Resources Department (KBNRD) purchased 10 juvenile trumpeters from the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary for re-introduction into the Western Upper Peninsula. These swans have green collars with white codes 51E-60E, inclusive. In 1999, another 13 juvenile Trumpeter Swans were released in the same region. These swans also have green collars 61E-73E, inclusive. These projects were coordinated with staff from the Ottawa National Forest (NF), Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Upper Peninsula Power Company, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, and U.S. Coast Guard. All swans were released at sites in Baraga, Gogebic, Iron and Houghton Counties, and at least weekly movements were monitored by Ottawa NF, KBNRD and MI DNR with visual observations and radio transmitters for 6 months before the winter migration. Most of the swans survived through January 2000. They successfully molted, took flight and adapted favorably to conditions in the western Upper Peninsula. Two swans died through natural mortality and lead poisoning. We'll release 12 more swans in 2000 with the same cooperators at Mallard Lake (Iron County), Prickett Lake (Houghton County), and Keweenaw Bay of Lake Superior (Baraga County).

Michael Donofrio

TRUMPETERS AT MONTICELLO, MINNESOTA - About 35 miles northwest of Minneapolis, in Wright County, a nuclear power plant keeps a 10-mile stretch of the Mississippi River open during winter. Swans are opportunistic and have adapted to such man-made sites. Sheila Lawrence, TTSS member and Monticello resident who has been monitoring trumpeters on the river since 1986, reported that the first birds arrived this year on 25 November. On 22 December, the numbers peaked at 324 adults and 123 cygnets. Less than 10 percent of the birds had bands, but the majority of the birds come from the combined Hennepin Parks (Minnesota) and Minnesota DNR flock. On January 6, the power plant shut down for 6 weeks of scheduled maintenance. Initially, it was thought that the river would freeze over and force the birds to disperse to southern locations. However, the winter stayed mild and pockets of open water were available on many sections of the river. The birds (250+ were counted one day) also spent time loafing in nearby potato fields. Joe Johnson of the Mississippi Flyway Technical Section Swan Committee alerted waterfowl managers and nongame biologists to the south, but no migration materialized. With unusually warm temperatures at the end of February, most of the swans left for nesting territories by the first of March.

DELTA WATERFOWL FOUNDATION LOOKING FOR TRUMPETER SWANS

- The Delta Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Station (DWWRS) in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, is interested in obtaining Trumpeter Swans to educate the public in its interpretative programs which are being developed to educate the public about waterfowl ecology. The Delta Waterfowl Foundation, formerly the North American Wildlife Foundation, began doing research on waterfowl and wetlands in the 1930s. Please contact Rob Olson, Assistant Scientific Director at (toll free) 1-877-667-5656 or e-mail delta@deltawaterfowl.com

SWAN SPECIALIST GROUP NEWSLETTERS ONLINE

- The 1997 and 1998 Swan Specialist Group Newsletters edited by Eileen C. Rees and published by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust for Wetlands International can be found at the following website:
www.greenchannel.com/www/research/publications/SSG/index.htm

IOWA TRUMPETER SWAN PARTNERS BANQUET –

The Iowa State University Trumpeter Swan Restoration Committee is hosting a banquet for the over 70 Iowa Trumpeter Swan partners on March 25, 2000, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Iowa State Center in Ames, Iowa. Proceeds will be used for Iowa trumpeter restoration. TTSS Vice President Larry Gillette will be the banquet speaker. For details, please contact Brenda Van Beek at 515-432-0959 or brendavb@iastate.edu

NORTH AMERICAN SWAN FUND GROWS AND A SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL APPEAL - TTSS wishes to thank Harry Lumsden, Charles H. Bell and Sherry L. Lundgren, for their recent donations to TTSS' North American Swan Endowment Fund. Sherry made her donation in honor of new daughter, Lillia Marie. A total of \$4,632 was raised during the Annual Appeal. Harold Burgess contributed his donation in memory of James Carlton McQueen, former President of the Lower Rio Grande Audubon Society. Thank you to all for the generous support!

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Gisele Barrett
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Janice Sampson
Larry and Arleen Schinke
James H. Snowden
Lynn M. Spicer
Florence L. Swanson
John Turner
Bob Uhl
David K. & Kitty Weaver

TULSA TRUMPETER - A larger than life size bronze monument of a Trumpeter Swan landing with its wings outstretched will be donated to the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, in honor of the Swan Lake Waterfowl Society. The monument will be located at the entrance to Swan Lake where an unveiling ceremony will be held on May 4, 2000, at 4:00 p.m.

Natureworks Inc. and its patrons are donating the "Tulsa Trumpeter" monument to the city and have commissioned Bradford J. Williams, a well know Montana sculptor, to produce the bronze art piece. Natureworks Inc., a non-profit group from Tulsa, Oklahoma, uses its proceeds from the Natureworks Art Show to fund specific wildlife projects, often in consort with other sponsors or as matching funds for identified wildlife conservation causes.

WEB WANDERING - Our own Society web site (<http://www.tiaga.net/swans>) has made the *New York Times* (13 January 2000) that has a nationwide circulation of over a million! The article titled *Sites Track Trumpeter's Comeback* included information about trumpeter natural history, migration, reintroduction efforts, The Trumpeter Swan Society, and other web sites that are linked to TTSS' homepage. Congratulations to webmaster Jim Hawkings for keeping our site up to date and informative!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

Student/Retired__\$15 Regular__\$25 Family__\$30 Organization__\$50 Supporting__\$100 Life Member__ \$500
Make check/money order payable to TTSS (Canadians please write "in U. S. funds" on personal checks). Mail to:
The Trumpeter Swan Society, 3800 County Road 24, Maple Plain, Minnesota 55359

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[Editor's Note: Any persons or organizations paying \$100 or more per year for membership will be an Affiliate, excepting life memberships which are paid only once.]

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WELCOME ALL

Yukon Celebration of Swans April 15 –23

Each spring, thousands of swans and other waterfowl migrating north descend on M'Clintock Bay, south of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Join in the great swan viewing and interpretive programs at the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre. For more information about events and viewing opportunities coming in April, call (867) 667-8291 or visit their swan viewing web site at www.taiga.net/spring/cos.html

Swan Festival in Grande Prairie, Alberta

The 2nd Annual Swan Festival will be held Sunday, April 30th at Saskatoon Island Provincial Park from 12:30 to 5 p.m. There will be guided bus and hiking tours to view the migrating swans and festival displays. Proceeds go to Friends of Saskatoon Island. Please call (780) 766-2636 for details.

Erratum: In *North American Swans*, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 26, the second line, first column, first paragraph, was transposed with the first line, second column. The sentence should read: By July 9, 1774, they had traveled about 45 miles father inland, crossing some lakes and "killing some swans, geese, etc."

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