



TRUMPETINGS

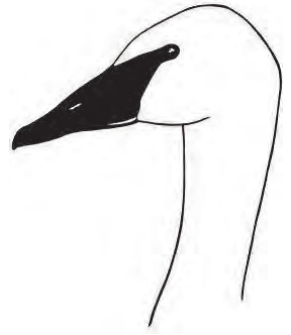
Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society

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Since 1968: Assuring the vitality and welfare of wild Trumpeter Swans

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Celebrating 50 years of Trumpeter Swan Conservation



Photo by Margaret Smith

The Trumpeter Swan is North America's largest bird and one of its rarest. It embodies grace, beauty, and unspoiled wildness. It is the crown jewel of healthy wetlands.

Through the generous support of our donors over the past 50 years, The Trumpeter Swan Society is celebrating a half century as North America's leader of Trumpeter Swan conservation. Since our founding in 1968 the Society has played a pivotal role in the remarkable return of Trumpeter Swans to North America.

Fifty years ago Trumpeters occurred in only a few limited areas and were highly vulnerable. The first range-wide survey in 1968 reported a total North American Trumpeter Swan population of 3,722. In 2015, the range-wide survey reported about 63,000 Trumpeter Swans on the continent. What a remarkable journey of restoration!

Trumpeter Swans are native only to North America. They are the largest waterfowl in the world. Although most populations are increasing, they are one of our least abundant native birds.

Today our swan conservation programs span across North America and its four Flyways. We work with many partners on your behalf on swan restoration and swan management, advocacy on behalf of swan health and securing swan habitats.

Thanks to your support, we help coordinate North American efforts in the restoration and secure establishment of migration routes and wintering areas of Trumpeter Swans. We provide expertise on Trumpeter Swan

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biology, habitats, and any issues that may have impacts on Trumpeter Swans and associated habitats in North America. We support research by biologists and manage our citizen science project, Trumpeter Watch.

Through the support of our donors and the expertise of our board and staff, over the past 50 years some of our key accomplishments include:

- ◆ Established a permanent endowment, the North American Swan Fund (NASF) to help support swan habitat protection, public education, and research. Since 2003, the NASF has funded nearly \$35,000 in swan research, habitat protection, and education projects. Our website features our currently funded research projects.
- ◆ Participation in the planning and implementation of all Trumpeter Swan restoration efforts in North America since 1968. We have provided expert input and review of past and current Flyway Trumpeter Swan Management Plans.
- ◆ Maintained contact and provided informational services to waterfowl biologists working continent-wide on Trumpeter Swan management and research.
- ◆ Hosted 24 biennial Swan Conferences which have been the primary means of international exchange of information on Trumpeter Swans and their management. Most proceedings have been published. Abstracts are available on our website. We also co-sponsored the 4th and 5th International Swan Symposia. We have periodically published a journal, **North American Swans**, that includes research results, population status reports, restoration project updates, and other information related to Trumpeter Swans.
- ◆ Assisted in coordinating and conducting the 5-year range-wide North American Trumpeter Swan surveys.
- ◆ Focused attention on the dangers of lead poisoning of Trumpeter Swans and supported research into rehabilitation of swans.
- ◆ Coordinated the use of rehabilitated birds and captive propagation stock in restoration projects.
- ◆ Worked with banders and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bird Banding Lab to review and revise the banding protocol for swans in North America.
- ◆ Provided genetic samples from Yukon, British Columbia and Idaho breeding Trumpeter Swans to aid genetic research. We are currently partnering with zoos on the genetic testing of zoo swan breeding pairs for best Flyway placement programs.
- ◆ Fifty years of advocacy on behalf of Trumpeter Swans, their health, and securing swan habitats.

Thanks to your support, we are able to keep swans in the forefront of agency management programs. We are your voice on the swan committees in the Flyways where swan management and restoration decisions are made. Our uniqueness includes the experience and technical expertise of our members and Board members on Trumpeter Swan biology and agency processes for decision making. We are able to bridge the gap between government agencies, non-profit organizations, and others to provide continent wide knowledge of swans as well as local and regional swan issues to effectively assist in the preservation and growth of Trumpeter Swan populations.

The **Swan Stories** in this issue share member experiences about the return of Trumpeter Swans. These stories span both time and geography. Learn what it was like to be part of Minnesota's first restoration effort, or helping to release swans in Montana. Experience again seeing and hearing a Trumpeter Swan for the first time or the beauty of swans across North America. Read what it is like to witness a predator threat and man-made threats to swan health. Finally, hear from members who appreciate what others have done so you can now experience the wild grace and beauty of the return of Trumpeter Swans. ◆

We would like to thank the following foundations for their support in 2017 and 2018: Fanwood Foundation, Felburn Foundation, Foley-Frischkorn Wildlife Conservation Fund, Open Door Foundation, Oregon Wildlife Foundation, Perkins Foundation.

Iowa Swan Tracking

Iowa students learn how analyze GPS swan tracking data

Thanks to you and other funding partners, university students are learning to analyze data from new technologies to answer questions important to natural resources management.

Iowa State University ornithology students are demonstrating their skills analyzing data transmitted from the GPS collars of 13 Iowa cygnets in the Iowa Track a Trumpeter project. Beginning in January students led by Ph.D. student Tyler Harms and Dr. Stephen Dinsmore used the collars' data to demonstrate their analysis skills answering such questions as 1) where are the swans spending time: agricultural lands vs water, 2) as the cygnets aged, did the distance they moved for feeding and roosting change? 3) was there a certain age when movements dramatically changed? 4) did roosting and feeding time intervals change as cygnets aged?

Of the original nine cygnets collared in 2017, three died within a couple of months (power line mortalities; the collars were retrieved for re-use); two collars failed to transmit; one cygnet was discovered wintering with its family in Arkansas with its GPS transmitter missing. This fall four additional juvenile swans were collared and the new collars have recorded at least 1,000 points each. By mid-October, all but one swan had left its natal wetland, but all were within about 10 miles of their natal wetlands. There is one confirmed mortality from a powerline strike. ♦



Coady W. Lundy holding cygnet during its capture and banding at Otter Creek Marsh on 16 August 2017. Nine cygnets were captured and collared in late summer, 2017.
Photo by Stephen J. Dinsmore

Trumpeter Watch needs your help

Do you see Trumpeter Swans in the winter?

Join our citizen science program! You can help track key migration stops and wintering areas of Trumpeters across North America. Now you can easily and quickly report your swan sightings online! Find the link on our home page to **“Report a Swan”** or go to: <http://bit.ly/SwanReport>. ♦

Right: *Trumpeter Swan cygnet reported in North Carolina’s Outer Bank, March 2018.* Photo by Peter Vankevich



TTSS earns GuideStar Gold Seal

The Trumpeter Swan Society was recently recognized for our transparency with a 2018 Gold Seal on our GuideStar Nonprofit Profile!

GuideStar is the world’s largest source of information on nonprofit organizations. More than 8 million visitors per year and a network of 200+ partners use GuideStar data to grow support for nonprofits.

In order to get the 2018 Gold Seal, The Trumpeter Swan Society shared important information with the public using our profile on www.guidestar.org. Now our members and potential donors can find in-depth information about our goals, strategies, capabilities, and progress. We’re shining a spotlight on the difference we help make in the world. ♦



Update from Oregon

Success is mixed for Oregon's 2018 Trumpeter Swan breeding season

We are happy to report our new breeding pair at Aspen Lakes Golf Course in Sisters, Oregon has one cygnet which will be moved to Summer Lake for release next spring.



This summer, TTSS purchased a 4-year-old male from Pennsylvania and a 3-year-old female from Indiana, to hopefully mate and produce cygnets for our Oregon restoration project. The pair was flown to Oregon in November. The swans were released at Pronghorn Resort, a golf club near Bend, Oregon.

A video by Gary Ivey, posted on our [Facebook page on November 14 \(photo left\)](#) was taken shortly after the swans first met and were placed at their new home.

Success in other areas of Oregon's 2018 breeding season was mixed.

The flock at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge is down to 4 adults (one pair, plus 2 adult females). The Malheur pair hatched at least six cygnets, but fledged none. The breeding wetland had water supply problems and as the water declined, the pair apparently tried to move their brood to another pond and likely lost them to predators during the move.

A pair on the Sabre Ridge Ranch, in Crook County hatched 3 cygnets but only fledged one. ♦

25th Swan Conference to be held in Missouri

Mark your calendar for November 2019! The 25th Swan Conference will be held near St. Louis, Missouri at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The final dates are not yet set.

The conference will be held when you will be able to see wintering Trumpeter Swans. Trumpeter Swans have been reported to arrive there for winter by early November, peak in December and January and head back north around February and into March. Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary has the distinction of a Globally Important Bird Area. Our partners for the 25th Swan Conference are the Audubon Center at Riverlands and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Starting in November 2011, The Trumpeter Swan Society partnered with The Audubon Center at Riverlands, [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rivers Project Office](#), [St. Louis Audubon Society](#), and the [Audubon Society of Missouri](#) to begin a citizen science monitoring program for Trumpeter Swans in the Great Rivers region. Volunteers for the Great Rivers Trumpeter Watch count the number of swans and report and track collared swans during the peak swan wintering months. We receive the reports and share them with the appropriate swan managers. ♦

My Swan Story by David Williams

MINNESOTA

I began working for Hennepin County Park Reserve District (HCPRD) in February, 1966. During the 1960's and early 1970's I was involved in the project to re-introduce the Trumpeter Swans to Minnesota. They had been gone from our state for about 100 years.

We transported about 20 adult swans from Red Rock Lakes in the Centennial Valley in Montana. The natural habitat was a large grassy wetland, accessible by air boat. The birds were transported in cages large enough for them to walk around in comfortably. The trip home was successful and uneventful.

We located the birds to an enclosed area on the edge of a small lake in Carver Park. For the next few years I fed the swans seven days a week. During periods of open water they were fed aquatic vegetation. During freeze up they received small grains, alfalfa pellets and loose alfalfa. We kept a small area of open water for the swans.

It was exciting to work with these amazing birds! The fenced refuge area was about 80-100 acres. It proved to be large enough for a few nest areas.

About the third year we had five cygnets hatched in the refuge. Three cygnets survived (see painting). The flock was free flying and that allowed some pairs to nest outside the refuge area.

The project was expanded to include wildlife specialists to better supervise overall management.

The Trumpeter Swan Society was started by HCPRD and has been a vital part of its overall success. I feel fortunate to have been a small part of the restoration project. It's a good feeling to see small flocks of Trumpeter Swans and realize I was part of this. I never tire of hearing their Trumpeting call! ♦



Original Sherm Pehrson watercolor. First cygnets hatched in Minnesota's Carver Park refuge by the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge adult swans transported for the HCPRD restoration program. Image courtesy of the Williams family.

My Swan Story by Gary Hubbard

MISSOURI

I still can't believe it! Last night 10 swans showed up on my pond! They stayed there all night.

I came out very early in the morning to see if they were still there and they were. They became spooked when they saw me and took off.

I've lived here for many years. I've seen peregrine falcons, hawks, and eagles, which are all really exciting. But seeing the swans was the best thing that has happened to me since moving here. They even have the eagles beat!

It has been more than 24 hours since I first saw them and I'm still ecstatic and can't believe that I saw them on my pond. ♦

My Swan Story by Kandi Smith



Left: Trumpeter Swans did not struggle when held securely in the arms of volunteers.

Right: The red-collared swans are ready for transport to a nearby reservoir for release in the Flathead Trumpeter Swan restoration project. Photos by Carey Smith

MONTANA

Over the past couple years, my husband and I have had the opportunity and pleasure to participate in the pre-release and banding of cygnets as part of the Flathead restoration project. The boots on the ground team included breeder John Jarvis, tribal biologist Dale Becker, a veterinarian and volunteers on the Salish Kootenai Reservation.

To facilitate the capture of these penned cygnets, the team had to physically catch and secure these majestic birds for testing and banding. As the birds began to run and flail, I could totally see quite a rodeo coming.

To my surprise, as each was secured in the arms of a volunteer, the birds quieted, accepting the needles, handling and placement of the big red numbered collars calmly.

What sticks in my mind is the endearing way in which many of the birds drooped their long necks and heads around their captors' necks, exhibiting such a gentle, trusting nature. This is where they HAD me!

Smoothly and orderly, the ordeal was over and the youngsters were carefully carried to a trailer for transport to a local reservoir. Upon the arrival and doors swinging open, twelve boisterous cygnets exited for their first taste of freedom and real use of their gigantic wings. They briskly marched to the pond, chattering all the way, and eventually bobbed off into the distance. Waiting anxiously on the shore like nervous parents, the surrogate team gave a hoot and a holler in response. It had been a successful and safe release into the wild and was a very good day for man and bird.

As an added bonus for us, some of the birds return to a fishing access near the place we walk the dog many mornings. From afar, we can check their numbered collars. Occasionally we get to say hello again to one of those fabulous birds we got up close and personal with one summer day in Montana. ♦

My Swan Story by Cathy Kerr



“Mac” the 20 year-old cob at the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in Ontario. Photo by Cathy Kerr

ONTARIO

I had never seen a swan of any description until twenty years ago. I knew swans lived somewhere but not in my community.

In 1999 our local wildlife area had received a lot of printed media coverage about a pair of trumpeter swans being brought to the pond in hopes of increasing the population. I passed the road that leads to the wildlife area everyday but never went in to explore.

One day I decided to check it out and drove in. Parking lot was empty, no one around. Rolled my window down and heard for the first time the bugle of the swans. I went back the next day and came across the swan keeper and he showed me around the enclosure and I got a close up look.

I swallowed the hook. The pristine beauty and sheer size was unforgettable. I wanted to help.

Years went by and life got in the way of me spending any time at the pond but now that I have retired I go back frequently to visit an old swan friend we call Mac. There is more to Mac's story but I'll make it short.

Mac is a twenty year old cob and was located to this pond along with ten other cygnets in 2000. Harry Lumsden, aka Father Swan, founder of the Ontario Trumpeter Swan restoration project, knew in his experience this pond was an ideal location for these young swans. Mac II became the dominant cob and still resides there today. This year he and his pen have three surviving offspring.

When I see transient swans gathering on the ice I know they are the direct result of Harry Lumsden breathing life into the restoration of these magnificent waterfowl. I often think about how close a call it was to losing these special birds. All volunteers and organizations involved with this success story should be very proud to say they had a part in it even if in only one small way. Fly high and live long my friends. ♦

My Swan Story by Bill Quirk

ALASKA

Cygnets die from natural causes such as injuries, chronic health problems, and predator attacks. I have witnessed from my Arctic Tern airplane bald eagles hovering overhead and making steep dives to attack newly hatched cygnets with their sharp claws. The eagles were not successful as the cygnets were close to their parents for protection or even went under their feathers and disappeared.

In 2018 I observed for the first time a predator attack by a pair of coyotes on a nesting pair of swans along the Knik River west of Hunter Creek.

One of the coyotes was on the edge of a shallow water body attempting to rush in to catch a cygnet. The adult female swan and her two cygnets swam to the middle of the pond while the adult male swan stayed near shoreline defending against the attacking coyote. The male swan was using its wings to strike the aggressive coyote and keep it at bay. The second coyote was standing on shore watching the fierce action. The swan did not allow the coyote to advance toward the middle of the shallow pond where the cygnets were holding on for their lives.

After several rushing attacks by the coyote and about 5 minutes later, the coyote gave up as it was clear the male swan was too much for the coyote to reach the cygnets. The pair of coyotes trotted away from the pond disappointed.

I watched the whole event while circling at an elevation in my airplane high enough above the animals that they would not have noticed my presence. It was like being in a front-row seat watching a sporting event. ♦

My Swan Story by Gregory Cook



Photo by Gregory Cook

YUKON

We just returned late last night from a week in Yukon in late September. The fall colors were extraordinary but so was the Trumpeter Swan viewing on Dezadeash Lake. Six pairs, sometimes together and sometimes separated. Preening, feeding, resting, paddling around, paddling madly to get in full take-off mode before flying, speaking softly and trumpeting loudly--a fine panoply of behaviors and sounds played out against an overwhelmingly spectacular backdrop of color and Yukon mountains. ♦

My Swan Story by Linda Claerhout

WISCONSIN

On the evening of May 2, 2018, this cygnet was discovered wrapped in fishing line near the shore by two men. When my husband and I and our dog arrived to do our nightly walk along the shoreline we saw them and several people standing around the swan, which was still breathing, tho' shallow. It was unable to even hold its head up. We suspected this swan was one we had been watching earlier that was ailing but we had difficulty finding lately.

The swan passed away only minutes after we arrived at the scene.

One of the men who brought it to shore and untangled the fishing line had two children, a young daughter and son. The young boy asked me if I knew how old the swan was and I told him it was a young cygnet, perhaps almost a year old since it still had a gray neck. Unknown to me the young girl was writing something on her paper pad while we talked about what to do knowing it could not be left there for scavengers, because in all likelihood it has been ill with lead/ other issues, unable to fly for some time. We had been looking for the sick swan each day but did not see it.

Sadly it must've been caught in the fishing line today sometime, where it was found.

I noticed a piece of paper lying beside it. I bent down and saw the young girl had written a note for the swan. She wished for the note to be with the swan and had laid it next to it. The note read: R.I.P. cute trumpeter swan. 2017-2018. It died because of fishing line! 😞

It was heart wrenching to see and very moving. Again I am so sorry we could not help this young swan. None of us will be able to forget what we saw this evening. The young boy said before they left, "nobody should leave fishing line for animals to get tangled up in." ♦



Photos by Linda Claerhout

My Swan Story by Carlene Hardt

WASHINGTON (Eastern)

Late September 2018, I was at Turnbull National Wildlife in Cheney, Washington. To my delight I came across two cygnets preening on Windmill Pond. I watched and photographed them for over an hour, and they didn't seem to mind me being there.

As I watched them fluff their feathers, stretch their wings, eat, preen and interact with each other, it occurred to me that they were as graceful and as lovely in their own way as the more-familiar white adult swans.

One of them was standing on a little rock in the pond when the second one swam over. I wondered if they would take turns, but I was pleasantly surprised to see that they both ended up on the rock. Good thing they were buddies!

Once they were out of the water, I could see their feet, which looked like big floppy pieces of thick, wet leather – with claws! When one of them started to stretch its wings, I thought surely there wouldn't be enough room, but the stretch was successful and this became one of my favorite pictures. ♦



Photo by Carlene Hardt

My Swan Story by Jacques Mersereau

Note: For the past few years, members of Trumpeter Swan families nesting and loafing along the roadside at a rural intersection near Ann Arbor, Michigan have died after being hit by cars. Local members contacted TTSS for help as the deaths were thought to be intentional. Over the past couple years we have offered several suggestions for barriers to prevent swan loafing at the side of the road, as well as plans to create alternative loafing sites. We received this update at Thanksgiving.

MICHIGAN

Happy Thanksgiving to you and all the Swannies!

I just wanted to let you know that at Swan Corners this year a new (?) pair hatched four cygnets. One was killed by a car - and we are not sure it wasn't intentional, but the good news is the three babies made it!

After they left the corners, I was driving by as is normal on my way to work – wondering where they had gone when in the beautiful morning sun some movement caught my eye. There, about 50 feet off the ground, flew the entire family in perfect formation with mama and daddy leading the way. What a sight to see!!! Keep up the good work! ♦



Three cygnets survived to fledge at "Swan Corners" in Michigan. Photo by Jacques Mersereau

My Swan Story by Carey Smith

WASHINGTON (Western)

I used to spend some time every fall gazing over bobbing decoys in the rain and the fog. On an especially foggy day many years ago, my lab Boomer and I were hunting on a small pond near the lower Columbia River. Despite my calling, or maybe because of it, the ducks were not finding their way through the fog.

While Boomer and I were sharing my lunch, we heard a raucous cacophony ascending upon our blind. I thought we were being approached by a warming up middle school band trumpet section.

The first things we could see through the fog were these black catcher's mitt-sized feet against the white background. These were being used as speed brakes and then as seaplane floats as about a dozen trumpeter swans planed to a stop some twenty yards in front of our blind.

Boomer, who unfortunately is often already out in the decoys to meet most waterfowl species, was as awestruck as was I. We sat transfixed, watching them perform their post flight rituals of flapping and fluffing and finally paddling into the mist. This was my first up-close experience with these regal birds and prompted me to join The Trumpeter Swan Society. ♦



"Boomer" Photo by Carey Smith

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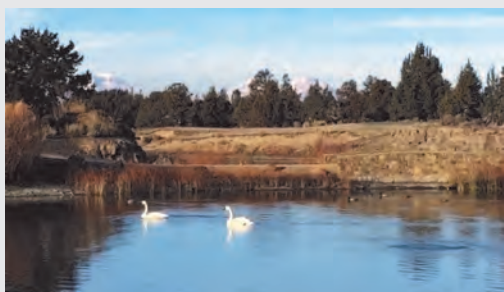
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For all you do for Trumpeter Swans, thank you!

Assuring the vitality and welfare of wild Trumpeter Swans for 50 years



Left: *TTSS has a new swan pair in Oregon*

Center: *“My Swan Story” includes a story by Carlene Hardt of this year’s cygnets at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Washington*

Right: *“My Swan Story” by Cathy Kerr shares her journey of appreciation for the return of Trumpeter Swans to Ontario*

Photo on page 2 by Richard Sonnen



Please consider a gift to TTSS through your will, trust, retirement account or life insurance. Together we can protect the beauty we love.

TRUMPETINGS EDITORS

John Cornely, Gary Ivey, Carey Smith, Margaret Smith

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