



# TRUMPETINGS

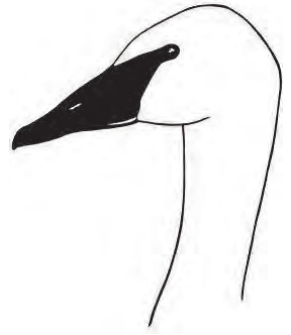
*Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society*

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

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## Proposed Tundra Swan hunt changes may impact Trumpeter Swans

**Public comment period open until January 15, 2018. Docket No. FWSHQ-MB-2017-0028**  
**Contact information on page 2.**

In the Central and Atlantic Flyways, Tundra Swans of the Eastern Population (EP) are currently hunted through a permit system in five states (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, North Carolina and Virginia). Tundra Swan hunting began in those states in 1983 and 1984. The hunting of Eastern Population Tundra Swans is regulated through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 2007 Eastern Population Tundra Swan Management Plan, Appendix C. Currently 9,600 Tundra Swan hunt permits are issued for the five states to share.

Hunters find it difficult to distinguish between Tundra Swans and Trumpeter Swans. In these states, any hunter who mistakenly shoots a Trumpeter Swan during the Tundra Swan season is violating the law by taking a species for which no hunting season has been authorized.



*Two Tundra Swan adults (front, center) are smaller than the Trumpeter Swan cygnet behind them and the Trumpeter Swan adult, upper left. Photo by Jan Kitzing*

The USFWS is now accepting public comments, through January 15, 2018, on an Environmental Assessment (EA) proposal that includes not penalizing hunters for shooting a Trumpeter Swan in the Tundra Swan hunt. The proposal would also extend similar hunter protections for any future Tundra Swan hunt authorized in the Atlantic, Mississippi and Central Flyways.

The proposal would allow for states in the Central, Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways, where no Tundra Swan hunting is currently allowed, to open a future Tundra Swan season under certain conditions, with hunter penalties removed for accidental take of Trumpeter Swans.

New swan hunt proposals could include states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan and Ohio that have restored, or are restoring Trumpeter Swans, and also have Tundra Swans migrating through during hunting season to their wintering grounds on the East Coast. Monitoring and limiting the total allowable take of Trumpeter Swans

# Proposed Tundra Swan hunt changes may impact Trumpeter Swans

is being considered for existing and new proposed hunts in those Flyways. “Unlimited take” of Trumpeter Swans is proposed as an option as well.

**Removing penalties for accidental take in effect makes the hunt a “general swan season” even though it remains a Tundra Swan hunt as referenced under the EP Tundra Swan Management Plan.**

**If you would like to make a public comment, mail it to:** Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-HQ-MB-2017-0028; Division of Policy, Performance, and Management Programs; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC; 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041

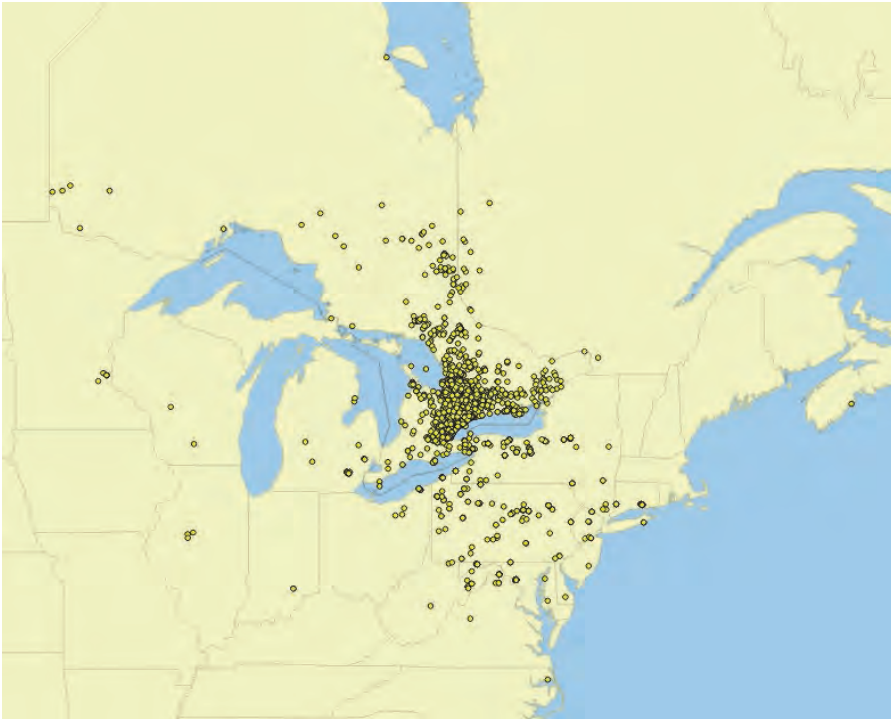
**If you would like to submit your comments electronically, visit:**

<https://www.regulations.gov/comment?D=FWS-HQ-MB-2017-0028-0121>

## **TTSS Board comments to the USFWS included the following concerns and recommendations:**

- Trumpeter Swans have not been fully restored to their historic range. There are some areas where the Interior Population continues to be restored. We want any Tundra Swan hunt to have a minimal negative impact on Trumpeter Swans.
- While we have concerns about general swan seasons in existing Tundra Swan hunt states, we are more concerned about the impacts of general swan hunts on Trumpeter Swans that would result from new Tundra Swan hunting proposals being approved. This is especially true in areas of the Mississippi Flyway where Trumpeter Swans have been restored and now nest or winter in conjunction with Tundra Swan migration corridors.
- We recommend putting monitoring and early detection methods in place to measure the impact of Tundra Swan hunting on Interior Population Trumpeter Swans. Monitoring protocols for Trumpeters should include continuation of the 5-year range-wide survey, although that interval may need to be shortened to detect any population impact on a timely basis. New swan hunts without meaningful data collection to monitor impacts would be irresponsible and not compatible with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act responsibilities delegated to the USFWS.
- Our expert swan biologists believe the EA is flawed in assuming Trumpeter Swans and Tundra Swans are equally vulnerable to hunting. We believe Trumpeter Swans may be more vulnerable to hunting mortality as they have had years of adapting to the non-threatening presence of people in their restoration environment and exhibit other behavior differences that increases the likelihood of being shot. Little, if any, monitoring of Trumpeter Swan distributions, movements, and behavior during Tundra Swan seasons has taken place in the Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic Flyways.
- We are concerned that increased take of even small numbers of Trumpeter Swans in hunted areas of Montana could impact range expansion of restoration projects currently underway for this struggling population.
- The use of Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data or Midwinter Waterfowls Survey (MWS) data to make any inference about Trumpeter Swan population size or any waterfowl species, is inappropriate. Observers’ counts are often categorized generally as swans and are not recorded separately by species of swans. Atlantic Flyway Trumpeter Swan sightings are based on CBC and MWS data, rather than swan surveys designed to reliably estimate swan populations by species. ♦

## Ontario's marked swans observed in 15 states and 3 provinces



Above: Between 1986-2017, more than 700 sightings of Ontario Trumpeter Swans have been reported. Mapping by Sara Handrigan, data consolidation by Gary Lane.

Right, bottom. Harry Lumsden led the Ontario Trumpeter Swan restoration effort. Photo by Beverly Kingdon

Above top: Ontario marked swans have yellow wing tags with black letters and numbers. Wing tags generally last four years. They are large and visible, aiding ease of reporting. The tags are modified cow ear tags and do not collect water or freeze.

Photo by Janet Bradshaw

Harry Lumsden, retired Ministry of Natural Resources biologist, is the force and visionary behind the return of Trumpeter Swans to Ontario, Canada. TTSS is honored to have him serve as a board member for nearly 30 years.

In the 1980s, Harry Lumsden obtained eggs and birds from the Alaskan and Rocky Mountain populations. He recruited Ontario landowners to host captive breeding pairs. Between 1982-2006, 584 captive reared Trumpeter Swans were released at two years of age at 52 locations in southern Ontario.

Over the past 34 years, nearly 1,600 Ontario Trumpeter Swans, both captive reared and wild-hatched, have been marked. It is estimated about 30-40% of Ontario's southern swans are marked with wing tags and leg bands. Each year between 80-100 swans, both adults and cygnets, are tagged where they congregate for winter: LaSalle Park in Burlington, Washtago, Port Severn, Sudbury and along the Toronto waterfront. Banding of cygnets is encouraged to develop family tree records. In the last two years, there has been some banding of cygnets at their natal grounds before they migrate for winter. This helps track cygnets that may become separated from their family group. For example, in 2016 one tagged cygnet wintered in Nova Scotia and another in Delaware, while their families wintered at LaSalle Park in Burlington, Ontario.

Ontario has tracked its marked Trumpeter Swans (see map). Ontario swans have been reported in 15 US states and 3 Canadian provinces. The 15 states where 107 Trumpeter Swans have been reported include Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina\*, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia\*, West Virginia and Wisconsin. Provinces include Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. ♦

\*Permitted Tundra Swan hunting (see page 1) occurs in North Carolina and Virginia.

## Nesting swans return to North Dakota

One hundred years after they disappeared, Trumpeter Swans are returning to new areas



Above: North Dakota's 2007 nesting Trumpeter Swans were reported in Grand Forks County (red county, map above).

Nine years later in the summer of 2016 there was a second Grand Forks County nesting about 7-8 miles south of Emerado in a wetland created by mining sand and gravel in one of the prominent glacial beach ridges.

Above: Dr. David Lambeth's September 2007 photograph captures the first nesting swans to be reported in North Dakota in over a century. The nest was about five miles northeast of McCanna, North Dakota. The three cygnets likely fledged.

Between 2007-2016, three counties in northeastern North Dakota have reported nesting Trumpeter Swans! Grand Forks, Benson and Walsh counties have each had at least one nesting pair.

Mark Fisher, Matthew Sprenger, Chris Roed, of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Devils Lake Wetland Management District and local birdwatching enthusiast Dr. David Lambeth of Grand Forks County, reported the swan nesting successes in *The Prairie Naturalist* earlier this year.

Trumpeter Swans were once abundant in North Dakota prior to European settlement. Ornithologists observed them in substantial numbers. John James Audubon reported seeing them in 1843. North Dakota is in the Prairie Pothole region, an important area for waterfowl and other bird species due to the abundance of wetlands that once filled the landscape.

By the late 1800s, Trumpeter Swans were gone from the state. There were no subsequent breeding records for over a century.

In June 2007, a pair of Trumpeter Swans with cygnets was seen along the Turtle River in Grand Forks County. In September of that year Dr. Lambeth photographed the pair with three cygnets, making it the first breeding record documented in North Dakota in over 100 years! Sadly in April the following spring, an adult swan in the area was found dead and was confirmed to have been shot.

## Nesting swans return to North Dakota (cont.)

Eight years later, in 2015, Trumpeter Swans were seen again, this time in Benson County. A pair of adult Trumpeter Swans and six not-yet-fledged cygnets were seen at Wood Lake National Wildlife Refuge (WLNWR). The following year in 2016, a Trumpeter Swan pair again nested at WLNWR and hatched five cygnets in late May. The pair nested at WLNWR for the third time in 2017 and it had one cygnet.

Nesting success didn't stop there. Two other North Dakota counties had nesting swans in 2016!

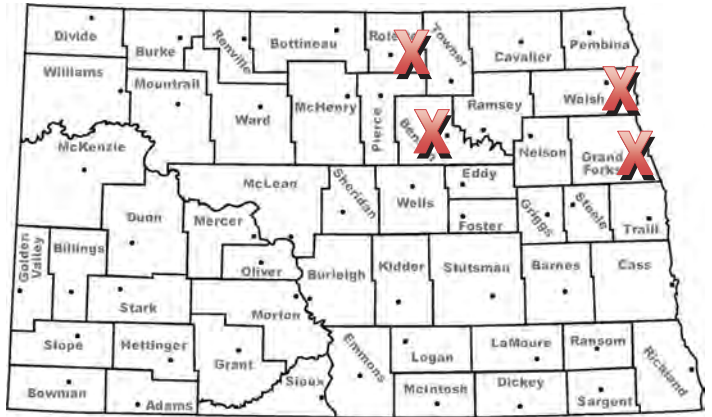
A breeding pair was reported for the second time in Grand Forks County by Dr. Lambeth after an absence of nine years. The earlier 2007 pair had nested in a marshy wetland along the Turtle River near farmland with pasture and cropland. The 2016 pair was seen in a marshy wetland in an area near a former gravel pit. The 2016 pair nested on a small cattail island in the center of the wetland. The pair was seen with two cygnets in June.

A third and new 2016 nesting area was discovered in Walsh County. The swan pair was seen tending six cygnets in late June in a prairie marsh typical of Prairie Pothole habitat (photo right, middle). This wetland yielded another nesting success in 2017 (photo right, bottom). This year the pair was observed tending eight cygnets!

Nesting swans in North Dakota reached another milestone in 2017. A new nest location was reported in a fourth county, Rolette County, with one pair observed and four cygnets!

Given the large swan population in nearby Minnesota and the growing population in Iowa, these North Dakota records could be the beginning of an increase in nesting activity in the state.

It could be Trumpeter Swans are dispersing across the Red River Valley shared by Minnesota and North Dakota and into the heart of the Prairie Pothole region. ♦



Above: In 2017 Rolette County joined three other North Dakota counties to report nesting Trumpeter Swans since 2007



Walsh County swans: September 2016 (above), June 2017 (below)  
Photos by Chris Roed, USFWS



## More cygnets released in Oregon

### Update from the Oregon Restoration Project



Left: “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas any more.” Five cygnets from Topeka Zoo were released at Summer Lake, Oregon in September. Photo by Gary Ivey. Right: Oregon Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff, Gary Ivey of TTSS, and the Oregon ranch landowner “encouraged” a swan family to move to an area with more abundant water to improve the swans’ chances of survival from predators. Photo courtesy of ODFW

September was a busy month in the Oregon Restoration Project. The project is a partnership between TTSS, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Eight captive raised cygnets were released at Summer Lake Wildlife Management Area in central Oregon. Three cygnets were from Northwest Trek Wildlife Park of Metro Parks Tacoma in Washington. Five cygnets were from Topeka Zoo in Kansas. Cygnets in the Oregon Restoration Project receive individually marked green collars with white codes. Reports of collared swans help track individual swans to document where they feed, winter, or areas they migrate through. For example, two cygnets released at Summer Lake in September 2015 were seen less than six months later near Chico, California.

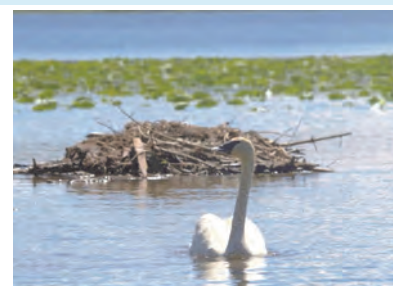
Since 2009, a total of 112 swans have been released at Summer Lake. Not all swans survive. There is an estimated 50% mortality of young swans in the first year following release due to predation, diseases and other causes.

There was additional good news in September. One pair of swans, one wild-born from Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and one captive-born from Wyoming, both translocated to Summer Lake in a prior year, began nesting about 100 miles north on the Sabre Ridge Ranch in Crook County. Their nesting attempts failed in the last couple years, most likely due to predation. However, this year the swan pair hatched four cygnets, with two surviving to flight stage. The cygnets were collared in early September as they were being “encouraged” to move to an area with more water to increase their chances of survival. ♦

## Yellowstone National Park swan and fish habitat

A year ago, we reported Yellowstone National Park (YNP) was planning various fisheries activities that would impact a lake where swans nest. We sent a letter to the Park Superintendent offering to assist with our swan expertise and that we would be watching the project closely. We are happy to report the 2017 September fish activities went well and the swans were not affected, having moved from the lake a few weeks before the activities took place.

Right: A YNP swan swims near its nest. YNP has two breeding swan pairs. Photo courtesy of Yellowstone National Park ♦



# Iowa swan movements being tracked

## *Nine Iowa swans receive GPS collars*



In late summer nine Iowa cygnets from different family groups received lightweight, solar and battery powered GPS collars. The collars collect hourly readings that will be downloaded twice a day, dependent on cell phone coverage. The initial cygnet group includes five females and four males. In January 2018 Iowa State University ornithology students will begin tracking and analyzing data downloaded from the GPS collars.

Tyler Harms and Dr. Stephen Dinsmore are leading the research. The collars will be used for one to three years or until they cease functioning. The research will collect data about summering and wintering areas, roosting sites, feeding patterns, migrations, and possibly differences in movement behaviors between females and males. The collars will also track mortalities. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources estimates that nearly three quarters of Iowa swans die before they reach age three. The collars will help confirm mortality numbers and causes.

TTSS is proud to be a funding partner of this research project, along with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Friends of Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Blank Park Zoo, and private individuals.

We will share a link to the website in 2018 so you can track the swans too! ♦



*Above left: A GPS collared cygnet returns to its family.*

*Above right: Cygnets were captured using a canoe or airboat, and a large net.*

*Above middle: Tyler Harms holds a collared cygnet just before release.*

*Above bottom: Dr. Stephen Dinsmore takes a photo of a released cygnet for project records.*

Photos by Margaret Smith

## Yukon's *A Celebration of Swans*



Left: *First Nation Elders share traditional stories*; Middle and right: *Thousands of local school children, grades 2-6, learn about conservation through outdoor and indoor activities at the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre.* All photos courtesy of Yukon Government except where noted

Are you looking for a new adventure? A trip with a birding wow factor? Consider a spring trip to the Yukon to see the return of migratory birds to their nesting grounds.

The annual *A Celebration of Swans*, a six week festival from April 1 through early May, is held in southern Yukon near Whitehorse. It is Yukon's largest birding festival, attracting about 10% of Yukon's population. The hub of activities is the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre, located at M'Clintock Bay on Marsh Lake. The bay offers a unique and abundant spring spectacle of returning swans and other waterbirds. It is a critical stopover on the long migration to northern nesting grounds. With open water in a region of ice-locked rivers and lakes, the bay offers shallow water, access to food, good visibility to see predators, and little disturbance to waterbirds.

Organized by the Yukon government's Wildlife Viewing Program the *Celebration* hosts a rich array of programs and activities. Art, family events, tours, guided walks, school programs, music, and story-telling are all part of the *Celebration*. The feathered stars of the *Celebration* are the returning swans, both Trumpeter and Tundra. However, 132 species of birds returning to their northern breeding grounds, ranging from rare to common sightings, have been reported, making this a great place for birders with a birding life list.

Why did the *Celebration* begin? In the 1980s there was growing concern about the disturbance by humans of resting birds at important staging areas in southern Yukon. The open waters were particularly attractive for canoeists, boaters, and anglers. Disturbance from snowmobiles was an additional concern. The government and local community started working together to address the problem.

Part of the solution was the creation of Swan Haven Interpretive Centre, a dedicated location and facility for bird viewing and education about the returning birds. The Centre opened in 1994 with the support of Yukon government's Wildlife Viewing Program, the Girl Guides of Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada.

The Centre is a 30 minute drive from Whitehorse. Both inside and out, the facility is a place of discovery, learning and enjoyment. It is open during a small window each spring, coinciding with peak waterbird migration. Admission is free.



*The primary festival message is waterbirds need undisturbed open water in spring to feed, rest and stay safe*



## Yukon's *A Celebration of Swans* (cont.)

The first annual "*A Celebration of Swans*" kicked off in 1994 as a one week festival. Today the *Celebration* has grown to a six week festival in April and May.

You can see returning birds at four staging areas: M'Clintock Bay, Tagish River, Johnsons Crossing, and Carcross. Eighty percent of Yukon's population lives less than an hour away from these staging areas.

Each year there is a unique annual commemorative poster. One thousand posters are printed and distributed for free. When you go, be sure to pick up a poster as a souvenir.

### What are the favorite programs and events?

- Bird banding demonstrations and presentations by the Society of Yukon Bird Observatories
- Walks and talks at migration hotspots throughout the festival
- Family Weekend event
- Art-themed workshops including watercolor painting
- Music nights used to attract new, non-traditional visitors
- Several local First Nations contribute to the festival through story-telling activities

### School Programs during the *Celebration*

Thousands of students have participated since the festival began. Grades 2-6 visit the Centre, with two groups per day, for three weeks in April. A school visit includes rotating activity stations so students can view the birds and learn about them through game-based play.

The same grades participate in an art contest with artwork displayed at the Centre. Visitors vote for their favorites. Prizes are awarded and winning entries are also displayed in Whitehorse at the recreation and fitness center.

The *Celebration* is a phenomenal regional success bringing together residents and visitors to appreciate and learn about the importance of their area for migratory birds.

What about its original purpose to reduce human disturbance on important migratory bird resting sites? While disturbance still occurs occasionally, local residents are quick to report it. Local media outlets will highlight these incidents and discourage them, often of their own volition. Social media has been an increasingly powerful and cost-effective means of sending conservation messages.

We thank Scott Cameron of Yukon Department of Environment for sharing this information at our 24th Swan Conference held in November, 2016 in Duncan, British Columbia. We invite you to take part in this marvelous celebration of swans and conservation! ♦

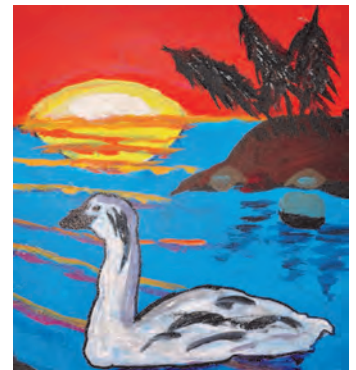


*Do you want to know which birds are showing up during your visit? Check out the daily "Swan Haven Report" of returning birds posted to the department's website and at the Centre.*

*Photo by Jim Hawkings*



*Walks and talks take place at migration hotspots*



*You can vote for your favorite student artwork at the *Celebration*.*

# TTSS continues winter habitat protection in Washington

## Swan habitat protection on Long Beach Peninsula protects many species



Loomis Lake (center left) and Island Lake (center right) are common intertidal lake habitat and home to wintering swans. Leadbetter Point is in the distance, with the Pacific Ocean on the far left and Willapa Bay on the far right.



Aerial view of Leadbetter Point, looking north. The Pacific Ocean is on the left. All photos courtesy of Columbia Land Trust except where noted.

The Trumpeter Swan Society has worked with Columbia Land Trust for more than a decade to conserve key overwintering Trumpeter Swan habitat on the coast of Washington State.

Leadbetter Point is the northernmost tip of the Long Beach Peninsula in southwest Washington. Leadbetter State Park (1,500 acres) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Willapa Refuge-Leadbetter Unit (1,740 acres) cover the northern extent. Columbia Land Trust has conserved another 120 acres at Hines Marsh (two important tracts of the Marsh were once owned by TTSS). There are approximately 500 undeveloped acres adjacent conservation areas. This is the last undeveloped beachfront area on the Peninsula.



Hines Marsh

Leadbetter Point hosts three Endangered Species Act-listed species: western snowy plover, streaked horned lark and pink sand verbena. It is the largest and most significant western snowy plover nesting area in Washington. Streaked horned lark also nest here in their natural environment. The presence of the plant, pink sand verbena is extensive. USFWS has very actively been restoring land for these species.



Left: Pink sand verbena (top) and the western snowy plover (bottom) are found at Leadbetter Point.



Photos: top, National Park Service; bottom, United States Fish and Wildlife Service

The Hines Marsh intertidal lakes and wetlands are also valuable for priority migratory birds, including Trumpeter Swans. Each winter Trumpeter Swans visit Long Beach Peninsula lakes, preferring those with minimal development. This area is also important for recreation. There are more than six miles of trails in the Park and Refuge and the beach is visited for razor clamming, walking and wildlife watching.

Columbia Land Trust is working to acquire the last remaining undeveloped private properties at Leadbetter Point before it is too late. Recent TTSS contributions will help support these efforts. In 2018, the Land Trust will acquire two new properties in this area. The land will be conserved to support wildlife, including Trumpeter Swans, in perpetuity. ♦

# Opportunities to support TTSS and enhance your tax deduction

**You make thoughtful decisions about your charitable giving.** You research your options, consider your capacity to give, and chose an organization with a mission you believe in with sound governance to put your hard-earned gift to work. That’s why you, and so many others, have chosen to give to TTSS. Your thoughtful contributions work to assure the vitality and welfare of wild Trumpeter Swans. There are more options to give while enhancing your tax deductions.\*



**A DONATION FROM YOUR IRA:** Anyone age 70 ½ or older can make a gift up to \$100,000 directly from their IRA each year. A married couple can make a gift up to \$200,000. An IRA gift will count against your Mandatory Minimum Distribution from your retirement account and won’t go toward your Adjusted Gross Income.

**And it’s easy to do.** Just tell your IRA plan administrator that you want to make a gift from your IRA to TTSS. They will send us a check and then report that gift as counting against your IRS required annual distribution in 2017.

**APPRECIATED STOCK GIFTS:** Your gift of an appreciated asset, often stock or mutual fund shares, is a valuable way to make a contribution to TTSS. By giving appreciated assets, you can reduce capital gains taxes on the appreciation and receive the current tax deduction on the full value of the gift.

**CONSIDER A PLANNED GIFT:** Bequests allow individuals to make much larger gifts than they could during their lifetime. A gift in your will, trust, or life insurance policy allows you to decide what your legacy will be and the kind of impact you have on the future—just as you planned.

*\*We advise you to consult your attorney or a tax professional about how tax benefits may apply to your specific situation. **The Trumpeter Swan Society’s tax identification number is 23-7220654.** Call TTSS for more information.*

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**For all you do for Trumpeter Swans, thank you!**

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



Left: Harry Lumsden is the visionary leader behind the restoration of Trumpeter Swans to Ontario. Ontario swans have been reported in 3 provinces and 15 states. Photo by Beverly Kingdon. Center: Nesting Trumpeter Swans have been reported in North Dakota after an absence of more than 100 years. Photo by Chris Roed, United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Right: An estimated 10% of Yukon’s population participate in the six week festival *A Celebration of Swans*. The festival was created more than 20 years ago to educate the public and reduce human disturbance to important spring staging areas for returning migratory birds, including swans. Photo courtesy of Yukon Government

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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