



TRUMPETINGS

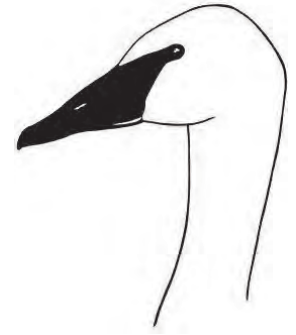
Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society

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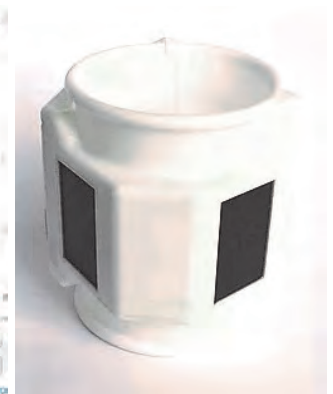


Since 1968: Assuring the vitality and welfare of wild Trumpeter Swans

VOL. XXX No. 1

MAY 2020

You will be tracking swans in the West and Midwest



Bookmark the public Midwest tracking website for the latest swan locations:

<https://trumpeterswan.netlify.app/locations.html>

Thanks to you, Trumpeter Swans in the Midwest and West will be tracked through the use of GSM/GPS collars. The Midwest multi-partner project will include summering swans in Iowa, Manitoba, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and wintering swans in Arkansas. In total, 106 collars will be deployed for this tracking project that ends in 2023. Thanks to you, TTSS is purchasing 7 collars to be deployed in Minnesota (summer 2020) and Arkansas (winter 2020-21).

You can see the swan travels, where swans were captured for collaring, and their current location on the public interactive website (link above). Transmitters record a location every 15 minutes.

Currently the website shows the travels of 19 swans collared in 2019. Later this summer and early fall, COVID 19 restrictions permitting, an additional ~75 collars will be deployed throughout the project area. If you're a photographer, or want to see or report the swans, check out the website for a recent location near you.

Trumpeter Swans in the West will be tracked as well with the same GSM/GPS type collars. At least 23 Trumpeter Swans will be collared and tracked in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and possibly Washington. Thanks to you and a donation from the Wasatch Wigeons, TTSS is purchasing 6 collars for the western swans for use at National Wildlife Refuges and the Oregon Restoration Project. The swans' use data will also be used for a wetland study by the Intermountain West Joint Venture. ♦

Photos left to right: Minnesota swan 6A was collared in August 2019; regularly updated Midwest swan tracking website through the University of Minnesota; Ornitela GSM/GPS tracking collar with solar panels.

Speaking up for swans, thanks to you

We asked and you responded. Thank you!

Public comments were recently sought on three proposals in the federal register:

1. requiring the federal Duck Stamp image to include a hunting related theme;
2. profound changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that essentially removes penalties for incidental take of migratory birds unless the proven intention is to harm the bird;
3. and a proposed harvest/hunting framework for 2020-21 that includes swan hunting changes for the Trumpeter Swan Interior Population based on the recently released Swan Hunt Environmental Assessment (page 3).

The Trumpeter Swan Society submitted public comments on all three proposals, essentially opposed to the new proposals. We sought your help via Enews to submit your personal comments on the federal register. ♦



Under the proposed federal Duck Stamp rules, future Duck Stamp images need to include a hunting related theme.

Above: 2016-2017 Duck Stamp featured Trumpeter Swans. Image by Joseph Hautman.

Your support helped us work on swan issues in the Flyway system

2020 North American Trumpeter Swan Survey: The 2020 range-wide survey will not be accomplished. The survey Steering Committee suspended the 2020 range-wide survey primarily due to lack of participation by the Canadian Wildlife Service, funding and other issues. They want the Flyway Councils to reconsider their information needs for swan management and work with the partners to develop replacement surveys. This range-wide survey has been the official instrument to monitor population status of Trumpeter Swans since 1968. Without the range-wide survey, the national and regional impact of general swan seasons on Trumpeter Swan populations will not be known (see page 3).

Mississippi Flyway: Executive Director Margaret Smith participated in the February 2020 Swan Subcommittee meeting. **She presented recommendations for additional topics that should be included in an updated Trumpeter Swan Interior Population Management Plan. It was announced the Swan Hunt Environmental Assessment had been published,** although no documents were shared with the Swan Subcommittee.

National Flyway Council Meeting: Margaret Smith presented an update to the National Flyway Council in March. This included TTSS recommendations of topics to include in the Interior Population Management Plan and updates about TTSS projects and priorities. She presented highlights from the 25th Swan Conference, including recommending the Trumpeter Swan as a public ambassador for wetland conservation to help achieve the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's goal for public support of wetland conservation.

Greater Yellowstone Working Group: TTSS Board President Dr. Gary Ivey attended the Greater Yellowstone Working group in March. Discussion included expanding the western GSM/GPS swan tracking project partners and geographic area. Dr. Ivey also presented an update about the Oregon Restoration Project and initial genetic testing results of zoo Trumpeter Swans. ♦

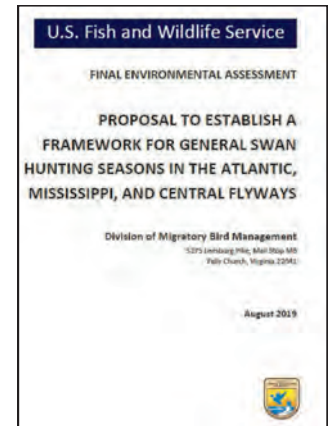


Update about proposed swan hunting for the Interior Population

In mid-April, just days before a public comment deadline of April 20, TTSS was notified that a general swan hunting season in the Central, Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways was included in a Proposed Frameworks Rule by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the 2020-21 hunting season.

TTSS received and reviewed the Interior Population Swan Hunt Environmental Assessment (EA). The Proposed Frameworks Rule assumed that the recently issued EA would be implemented for any new swan hunts in the Central, Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways. We asked that the Proposed Rule for swan hunting based on the EA be withdrawn.

The original intent of the EA was to eliminate penalties for hunters who mistakenly shoot Trumpeter Swans in a Tundra Swan hunt. The published EA alternative #2 was their preferred alternative but did not clearly address how Trumpeter Swan “take” would be minimized. Moreover, given the discontinuation of the range-wide Trumpeter Swan survey required in the EA or development of a robust replacement survey, the impact of a general swan season on Trumpeter Swan populations cannot be assessed. Thus, The Trumpeter Swan Society does not support the Proposed Frameworks Rule for general swan hunting in the Central, Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways based on the EA. ♦



Swan travels and releases in the Oregon Restoration Project

Swan updates from Oregon

Swan releases: Nine yearlings were released at Oregon’s Summer Lake Wildlife Area in April. The cygnets hatched last summer to our swan breeding pairs at Sunriver Nature Center and Aspen Lakes Golf Course. Thank you to both partners for their care of the cygnets and the parents.

Two Oregon Project swans continue their travel adventures:

Oregon swan 3@4 was reported recently in British Columbia! Last year he was reported near Thompson Falls, Montana and at Montana’s Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge. He was released at Summer Lake as a cygnet in September 2016. He was raised by his captive parents who are owned by The Trumpeter Swan Society and managed in partnership with Sunriver Nature Center.



2020 spring release of three Sunriver Nature Center yearlings at Summer Lake.
Photo by Gary Ivey

Oregon swan 4@2 is a traveler. She was at Summer Lake in February. She visited William Finley National Wildlife Refuge in March, returned to Summer Lake in April and was back to Finley NWR again in May; a flying distance of nearly 170 miles each way.

She was released at Summer Lake in 2017 as a hatch-year cygnet. Last year she also visited Finley NWR in early May, trekked up to Vancouver Island, British Columbia in mid-late May, returned to Finley NWR on June 1 and was back at Summer Lake by June 27, 2019, where she spent the winter. We hope this 3-year old will soon settle down and find a mate to help produce wild cygnets and help rebuild a viable wild Oregon flock of Trumpeter Swans. ♦

Thanks to you, swan health partnerships continue in Pacific NW

The highest number of swan deaths in seven Washington counties and Sumas Prairie, British Columbia are from suspected lead poisoning and power line collisions

This winter, over three quarters of swan deaths in a seven county area of northwest Washington and Sumas Prairie, British Columbia are from suspected lead and power line collisions. Fifty-five percent of the mortalities are suspected to be from lead. An additional 22% are powerline suspect.

This region is the largest wintering area for Pacific Coast Population Trumpeter Swans. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) systematically survey Trumpeter Swan night roost sites and agricultural use areas for swan mortalities from November into March. The mortality analysis is conducted by the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Preliminary interim report for the winter 2019-2020 season: as of March 8, 2020, there were 334 mortalities with 184 (55%) as lead suspect and 74 (22%) as powerline suspect. ♦

Location	Lead suspect	Power line suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas Prairie	64			3	21	88
Whatcom	98	25	1	9	18	151
Skagit	10	25	4	6	6	51
Snohomish	8	24		5		37
Clallam	1			1		2
Pierce	2					2
Island					1	1
King	1		1			2
Totals	184	74	6	24	46	334

Here's some good news! Four swans picked up this winter by WDFW were treated for lead poisoning at Whatcom Humane Society. The swans were released in Washington in late February. We received Trumpeter Watch reports that K31 (right) was doing well in April near Squamish, British Columbia, and K32 was in the Yukon as of early May. ♦



Photo of K31 by Julie Mushcack

The mid-winter Swan Count for this same area shows a decline in Trumpeter Swan numbers for the third consecutive year

The January 2020 Trumpeter Swan count was 13,328. This is a decline of over 2,300 swans from January 2019, and a decline of nearly 5,000 swans from the 2018 count of 18,293. ♦

TTSS welcomes new Board members

We offer our grateful thanks to outgoing board members Dave Hoffman, Jeff Nelson and Carey Smith for their years of volunteer board service. Carey Smith continues on the Executive Committee as Past President. Jeff Nelson will serve on the Conservation Committee. TTSS 2020 Officers are Dr. Gary Ivey (President) returning for a three-year board term, Michael Anderson (Vice President) and Dave Myers (Treasurer), returning for a three-year board term. We welcome our newest board members:



Daniel Casey is the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture Coordinator for Ducks Unlimited, working out of Billings, Montana. Previous positions included Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (1983-1999), and American Bird Conservancy (2000-2014), where he served as the Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region Coordinator. Dan is the past Chair of the Montana and Western Working Groups of Partners in Flight (PIF), and currently serves on the PIF National Steering Committee. He was the primary author of the 2000 Montana Bird Conservation Plan, a co-author of the *Birds of Montana* (2016), and former editor of the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts for Montana and Idaho. He has served on the Technical Committees of three different migratory bird habitat Joint Ventures.



Kent Duckworth retired in 2014 from decades of law practice in Lake County, Montana. He and his wife have lived on the west shore of Flathead Lake since 1989. They are co-owners of a 450 acre farm near Pablo, most of which is under a conservation easement for wildlife. They have thousands of waterfowl on their farm in the fall. He saw his first Trumpeters in Yellowstone when he worked there in the early 1970s. Kent participated in the release of cygnets in 2019 through the Flathead Tribe's Trumpeter Swan restoration program. He and his wife see Trumpeters on their farm and on Flathead Lake in the bay in front of their home.



Tiffany Mayo has been a full time Animal Keeper at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for 18 years. She is currently the Lead Keeper of the Hospital/Commissary area with a focus on avian incubation and hand rearing. She has been the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Trumpeter Swan Species Survival Plan Coordinator and Studbook Keeper since 2016. In this position Tiffany assists in managing the Zoological population of Trumpeter Swans, coordinates Zoo participation in restoration programs, and works to promote waterfowl and wetland conservation. Tiffany works with conservation organizations to connect people to their local environment using swans and other waterfowl and inspire action to protect wildlife and wild places.



Mark Vrtiska is the Waterfowl Program Manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. He has designed, directed, reviewed, conducted and coordinated field research, population and human dimension surveys, and conservation plans pertaining to waterfowl, including Trumpeter Swans, and other migratory birds. Mark served as the agency's representative on the Central Flyway Waterfowl Technical Committee, serving as the Committee's representative on the Human Dimensions Working Group and North American Waterfowl Management Plan Revision. As an Instructor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln he taught upper-level, graduate/undergraduate course in waterfowl ecology and management. He has conducted research and monitoring on the High Plains Flock of Trumpeter Swans. ♦

25th Swan Conference



Swans arrived at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary last November. So did swan biologists and enthusiasts from across North America. While the swans came to spend the winter, more than 100 people came to participate in the three-day 25th Swan Conference in Alton, Illinois.

The conference was hosted by The Trumpeter Swan Society, the Audubon Center at Riverlands, and Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (United States Army Corps of Engineers). The theme of the conference was “Swans, Confluences and Rivers... Connecting People.”

The conference was fascinating, fun and filled with information, inspiration and updates from across North America. There were 36 presentations, research posters, and an all-day field trip.

Before the first day’s presentations began, Riverlands Great Rivers Swan Watch volunteers offered sunrise viewing of Trumpeter Swans at Heron Pond.

The conference itself began with a warm welcome by the mayor of Alton, Brant Walker. Tuesday’s presentation topic areas included Trumpeter Swans of the Confluence, The Role of Refuges and Zoos in the Trumpeter Swan Story, Connecting People with Nature and Wildlife through Trumpeter Swans, and Keeping Wildlife Safe...Trumpeter Swan Health.

25th Swan Conference



Left to right: sunrise swan viewing at Heron Pond; an all-day field trip included a stop at Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge; social hour and sunset swan viewing at the Audubon Center at Riverlands.

Topic areas on the second presentation day included Swan Research and Conservation Issues and Needs, and Restoration and Updates of Trumpeter Swans.

A fascinating presentation about the nature-based tourism efforts for Alton and this region of small river towns was a great introduction to the region's nature assets. The all-day field trip showcased Trumpeter Swan overwintering areas and the unique floodplain habitats at two federal refuges, and state conservation areas. Sunset swan viewing at the Audubon Center and a social hour ended a memorable day of exploration.

The banquet Thursday night featured a presentation by well-known photographer Danny J. Brown. He shared stories behind some of his most popular Riverlands swan photos. A stellar silent auction, delicious banquet and delightful live music offered a wonderful end to the 25th Swan Conference. ♦



Save the date! The next Conference is planned for the fall 2022 in the Yellowstone region as a combined International Swan Conference and TTSS 26th Swan Conference.

Special Thanks to the 25th Swan Conference Sponsors and Supporters

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Lower Illinois River Valley-Rural Prosperity Initiative
The Dr. Jerome Katchin Waterfowl Foundation

Inkind donations from Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), the Audubon Center at Riverlands, Peppermint Narwhal, Rivers and Routes, volunteers from the three hosting organizations

Donations: Cathy and Kelvin Kerr, Chris and Lorraine Krusa, Jeanne Ortega, Elizabeth Parks, Terry Paull, Michael Rosenberg, Charlotte Van Zant-King

Photos by Margaret Smith

Silent auction donors. And you!

Trumpeter Watch Highlights – how you are making a difference

Highlights from this winter's Trumpeter Watch Reports

Thank you to all who submitted online Trumpeter Watch reports. You are recording history as it is happening. We also received many beautiful photos documenting sightings and important new locations. **Here are a few special stories from the over 500 Trumpeter Watch reports we received this winter season.**

Right: *Illinois is growing in importance for wintering swans.*

Photo by Terrence O'Rourke, Lincoln State Park, Marshall, Illinois



Washington

Four swans rescued this winter by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) were taken to Whatcom Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and treated for lead poisoning (page 4). They were released into the wild in late February at Lake Terrell (*photo right*). Two months later, TTSS received sightings of K31 and K32, passing the sightings to WDFW and Whatcom Humane Society. We received this message from WDFW to pass on to you:

“Thank you. It is always a welcomed reminder that the extremely hard work, dedication, and resources of Whatcom HS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center results in successes, and that the intense field efforts of our staff to respond to hundreds of reports is not in vain.”



Above: *Swans K30, K31, K32 and K33 released into the wild in late February in Ferndale, Washington.* Photo by Eric Ellingson

Below right: *K32, a female cygnet, was reported in early May near Whitehorse, Yukon.* Photo by Nellie Dale



Left: *K31 was reported in Squamish, British Columbia in April and May by several people. One reporter, a nurse, wrote that sitting quietly and watching K31 was very healing for her in the time of the COVID 19 crisis.*

Photo by Aaron Brink



Trumpeter Watch Highlights — how you are making a difference

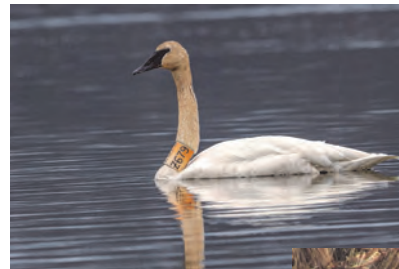


Pennsylvania: Ontario swan T77 is a female that hatched in 2017. She was tagged/banded in January 2018 at LaSalle Park, Burlington, Ontario. She caused a stir among Pennsylvania birders in October 2019 when she was spotted on the Clarion River. This winter she was spotted in several other locations. The map, left, shows sighting locations of T77 between October 2019 and April 2020. She's quite the traveler! Photo of T77 by Julia Plummer

Arkansas: Swans 4P2 and 4P4 (photo right) were spotted this winter at Atkins Bottom in Arkansas, a few miles from Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge. They are part of a 2008-2010 winter swan release project of Iowa and Arkansas. The project was an experiment to see if swans would migrate back to Iowa for the summer and return to Arkansas for the winter. Fifty-one 8-month old swans were released at Holla Bend NWR and Buffalo River National Park. This was a three-year, joint venture experiment between the Iowa DNR, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The Trumpeter Swan Society, and the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission.



Ohio: Two Virginia Trumpeter Swans were spotted in Ohio in three different locations. Virginia's Z679 (right) was spotted twice in Trumbull County and Z668 was spotted in Millersburg. They are part of the swan program run by the late William Sladen at the Environmental Studies on the Piedmont, Airlie, Virginia. We don't know how they made their way to Ohio! Photo by Mike Barney

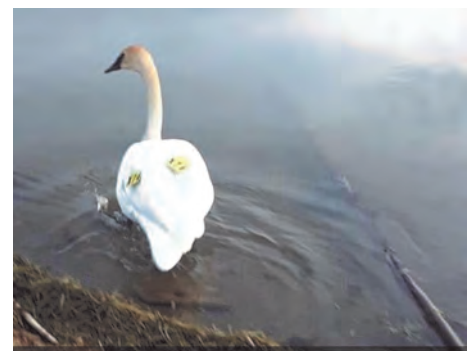


Above: Iowa swans 4P2 and 4P4 in Arkansas. They are part of an experimental project of "reverse migration."
Photo by Ron Duvall

Wisconsin: It took 15 years for the first report of this banded Ohio swan and it came through Trumpeter Watch! Ohio swan 7A9 (right) was reported with its mate in northeast Wisconsin in Langlade County. According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 7A9 is a "male that was banded at the Wilds (SE Ohio, Muskingum Co) in 2005. We have had no other reports of it until now." Photo by Sandy Clare



Ontario: A few years ago, a swan rescued after being shot near Bergland, Ontario was flown to southern Ontario for rehab. He was tagged as X74 this winter (December 2019) in Burlington. The swan spent time at Tommy Thompson Park in Toronto in January and February. We received a Trumpeter Watch report he was in Bailieboro in April. The Ontario Swan Group is excited to report X74 flew more than 730 miles and was recently reported near Nestor, Ontario, about 56 miles from the Manitoba/Ontario border. Amazingly, the new sighting is at the resort of a nephew of the original finder from Bergland. Photo courtesy of Kim Stevenson ♦



Member Corner

“The Homesteading Swans” by Heide Boyden

In our family home, nestled amongst four forties of forest and wetlands in northern Wisconsin, we are cozy in our beds. Sleep in this country is deep and often dreamless. It refreshes bodies tired from yard work and minds restless with worry. In the spring and summer, our sleep is most often interrupted not by first light, but by birds. It starts with the shy chirping, and then come the singers and the warblers, and the rascally caw of the crow. But it is the sound of the Trumpeter that says reveille, time to get up, there's so much to do.

On our little lake, in the year 2007, a pair of Trumpeter Swans gliding across the water captivated us. We had never had such aristocratic and dramatic winged visitors before. The great blue heron, the ducks, the loons, the bald eagle, the kingfisher were regulars and very appreciated, but this pair took one's breath away. Binoculars in hand, we shied away from the shoreline, wary of frightening away our most fascinating, feathered visitors.

The next day, the swans remained, and the next day, and the next. My brother was certain they were nesting on the far side of the water. We were delighted when seven fuzz balls started following Mom and Dad around, dipping their beaks and paddling their webbed feet.

Every year since, except for one, we have been fortunate to house a bevy of six or more cygnets on our lake. And now, in the early spring we often have two to three pair of Trumpeters vying for the nesting spot.

Our old farmhouse and the land it sits on has provided a home and cherished memories to five generations of our family. And now, we believe, the lake has housed at least two generations of Trumpeters.



My nieces grew up alongside the swans, summer after summer. As we watched the girls' baby curls turn into teen tresses, they watched the fuzzy gray cygnets turn into clumsy fledglings and eventually sleek white adults.

We coexist, the swans and our family, each providing the other with a necessity. We are the stewards of the land, providing a safe environment and they, the swans, promise that things wild and extraordinary will continue to exist.

We have dubbed the cob and the pen, James and Cecelia, respectively, after our grandparents who moved from Chicago to enjoy the natural beauty of Northern Wisconsin.

I wonder what Grandma and Grandpa would have thought of these majestic creatures visiting the dock daily. Would they see them as the celebrities they have become? On school days, the big yellow bus slows

Member Corner



to a stop, allowing the kids to watch the swans before going off to a day of study. Folks in the local restaurants and the gas station often ask how the swans are doing. James and Cecelia have become not just part of our homestead, but part of the community. The Trumpeter Swan has rightfully earned its place in legend and lore, and now, here too, in the north woods.

Sunsets, most days, find us relaxing on the dock or watching from the kitchen window, while the swans drift by, silhouetted by orange, gold, and flamingo. As the sun slips away and the sky turns to a magical, Maxfield Parrish blue, the swans disappear and nestle into their corner of the kingdom. Filled with wonder, our hearts beat more slowly and a satisfying calm takes over. It is time to rest. Time to sleep. All is right on our little lake. All is right for the night. Dreams will be sweet and the wake up call early. ♦

Heide Boyden is a proud member of the Trumpeter Swan Society, a writer, and a blogger who spends her time between Wisconsin and Montana. Photos by Autumn Psenicka, Heide's niece

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TRUMPETINGS EDITORS

John Cornely, Gary Ivey, Margaret Smith

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