



# TRUMPETINGS

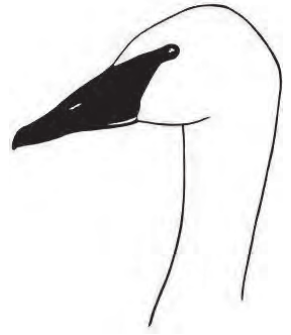
*Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society*

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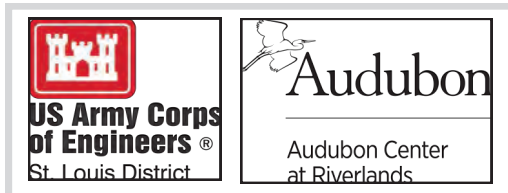


Since 1968: Assuring the vitality and welfare of wild Trumpeter Swans

VOL. XXVIII No. 1

MAY 2019

## 25th Swan Conference to be held November 19-21, 2019



*Save the date!*

*Plan to attend!*

**When: November 19-21, 2019**

**Where: Alton, Illinois**

**Our hosts: Audubon Center at Riverlands  
Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary**

Mark your calendars! The 25<sup>th</sup> Swan Conference of The Trumpeter Swan Society will be held in Alton, Illinois. Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (RMBS) is a Globally Important Bird Area or IBA. The United States Army Corps of Engineers manages this 3,700 acre wetland area. RMBS works to recreate the bottomland wet prairie and marshes that existed prior to the arrival of European settlers and offers open space, walking trails, fresh air, and spectacular views. The Audubon Center at Riverlands offers spectacular viewing and education about the wildlife, including Trumpeter Swans, at this confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

The Conference theme is “Swans, Confluences and Rivers... Connecting People.” The Swan Conference will look at the successes and challenges involved with long-term management of Trumpeter Swans. Special attention will be given to the role of Trumpeter Swans connecting people to the importance of wetland conservation and healthy waters needed by wildlife and people. Trumpeter Swan issues and opportunities across North America will also be presented. An all-day field trip will explore the area’s swan wintering sites.

Plan to come. Consider making a presentation. Donate a silent auction item. Be a sponsor. To learn more, contact Margaret Smith ([ttss@trumpeterswansociety.org](mailto:ttss@trumpeterswansociety.org)) for additional information, including presentation guidelines and submission dates. Check out our website for more information as it becomes available. ♦

Photos left to right: Danny Brown; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; two photos of Audubon Center at Riverlands by Audubon Center staff

## The legacy of Rodney “Sky” King



*Rod King (1945-2018). Photo courtesy of Rod King family*

Trumpeter Swans lost a good friend in late December 2018 with the passing of Rod King. If you live in the Midwest and see Trumpeter Swans, you are seeing his legacy. Rod played a key role in the collection of Trumpeter Swan eggs for several of the Midwest states' swan restoration programs, helping collect at least 600 Alaskan swan eggs over a decade from the Minto Flats and the Nelchina Basin. Rod supported Trumpeter Swan conservation for more than 40 years as a TTSS member.

His family wrote, "Perhaps Rod's greatest legacy to the wildlife field is the successful multi-state/province trumpeter swan restoration program that he orchestrated / spearheaded. Through his collection of swan eggs, Rod helped make it possible for legions of birders and conservationists to observe trumpeter swans for the first time in states and a Canadian province where their populations had been reduced or extirpated long ago, and sightings that will thrill ever more people in the decades to follow."

Sumner Matteson, of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources who flew with Rod King for Wisconsin's egg collection in the late 1980s, shared this excerpt from an upcoming Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources publication:



*Rod King collecting Alaskan Trumpeter Swan eggs for Minnesota in 1988. Photo by Carrol L. Henderson, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

"The late Rodney 'Sky' King played a significant and essential role in the Trumpeter Swan egg collection trips. In previous years he had played a similar role with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in locating Trumpeter Swan nests during May flights, including those he deemed most accessible for visiting during egg collection in early June."

"Rod flew us into wetland sites he had marked on a series of topographic maps and advised us on how to best approach each nest, especially if a cob (male swan) or pen (female swan) was highly defensive. Rod then would return to each nest to monitor productivity and determine how and if egg-collecting had affected nesting success."

" 'We returned in the fall,' he later told us, 'and it didn't seem to matter whether they would start out with eight or six or four or two eggs. It seemed that the average was about three cygnets that they ended up raising.' Trumpeters typically produce clutches ranging in size from five to nine eggs, with smaller clutch sizes often common with younger birds."

"Rod flew Sumner Matteson to the first nest on his topo map, taxiing right up to a nest. The collection itself proved somewhat challenging, if for no other reason that Sumner, who was collecting 40 eggs for Wisconsin and 20 for Michigan, had to battle severe air sickness brought on by the circling of the plane over a site. He later learned this was triggered by an inner ear condition that required in succeeding years - prior to the float plane trips - the application of a scopolamine ear patch, which thankfully corrected the problem."

"But that first year was the hardest 13-hour period he ever experienced— then or since. At one point, Rod turned to him and said, 'You're not going to expire on me, are you?!' (Later that fall, in front of a large crowd attending a Trumpeter Swan Society Conference in the Twin Cities, Rod, who preceded Sumner at the podium in talking about Minnesota and Wisconsin egg collection trips, at one point showed a blank, dark slide and exclaimed, "This is Sumner Matteson's view of the Minto Flats!" ♦

## Southeast Idaho refuges to begin swan study with your help



*Toomey Pond at Camas National Wildlife Refuge. This view can be seen from the auto tour route as it passes between Toomey Pond and Cattail flats and Two-way Ponds. In the background are the Lemhi and Lost River ranges to the west of the refuge. Photo: Camas National Wildlife Refuge*

### *Swan issues in Idaho*

For the past two years, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists have been collaring and tracking Trumpeter Swans nesting at three Idaho National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) in the Southeast Idaho NWR Complex: Camas NWR in Hamer, Bear Lake NWR near Montpelier, and Grays Lake NWR near Soda Springs.

The biologists have also been tracking mortality of Trumpeter Swan cygnets and analyzing shells of hatched and unhatched Trumpeter Swan eggs. They are looking for clues as to why cygnet mortality has been unusually high there since the late 1990s, as well as why breeding adult pairs are too often returning from their winter range without their young.



*One of the unhatched eggs sent in for contaminant analysis. This egg is from a Camas NWR Trumpeter Swan female with low hatching rate success.*

Photo: Camas National Wildlife Refuge

Thanks to you, TTSS will be assisting the Refuges to learn more about the swan issues in the Southeast Idaho NWR Complex.

Through past and current donations to TTSS' North American Swan Fund, we are funding the purchase of four GPS collars for one swan at each of the three Refuges, plus a swan at Red Rock Lakes NWR. The collars are being tested for climate condition performance as well as gaining initial information about the swans' landscape use during their annual cycle. The swan chosen for the GPS collar at Camas NWR will be a female swan with low productivity and hatch success (nest photo, above right) to track her foraging and landscape use. Swans will be collared with transmitters this summer.

Would you like to help fund vital swan research, habitat protection, and education projects? Make a donation of any amount to our North American Swan Fund (NASF). You can make your secure donation online (How to Help/North American Swan Fund) or use page 11 of this newsletter. ♦

# Swan health partnerships continue in Pacific Northwest

## *Highest number of swan deaths in eight Washington counties and Sumas Prairie, British Columbia are from suspected lead poisoning and power line collisions*

TTSS has worked for many years in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tracking mortality issues of wintering Trumpeter Swans in northwest Washington and Sumas Prairie, BC. This area represents one of the largest wintering areas 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 through March. The mortality analysis is through the Canadian Wildlife Service. WDFW operates a toll-free reporting line from November through March for citizens to report sick, injured or dead swans.

We receive weekly updates of swan mortalities during the winter season. In early April we received a preliminary interim report (below) from WDFW and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The final report will be issued later in 2019. The mid-winter Swan Count shows a decline in swan numbers for the second year in a row. Judson Lake straddles British Columbia and Washington and has a known “lead hot zone.” We have worked for many years to reduce lead poisoning at Judson Lake, most recently helping renovate the exclusion zone of poles. Most of the exclusion zone was ‘reflagged’ in December 2018 to discourage swan access. The renovated zone successfully excluded most of the roosting swans.

**Preliminary interim report for the winter 2018-2019 season. As of April 1, 2019, there were 389 mortalities in the target area of which 255 (66%) are suspected lead and 60 (15%) are powerline suspect.**

	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Aspergillosis	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas Prairie	27			1	1	13	<b>42</b>
Whatcom	119	28			9	8	<b>164</b>
Skagit	26	19	5		13	11	<b>74</b>
Snohomish	57	7			5	1	<b>70</b>
San Juan	1				1		<b>2</b>
Island		1					<b>1</b>
King	11				2		<b>13</b>
Pierce	14	3				1	<b>18</b>
Clallam		2	1		2		<b>5</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>389</b>



Whatcom County, WA. Photo by Roz Sealy

**Mid-winter Swan Count** of British Columbia’s Sumas Prairie and Washington’s Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, Island, San Juan, King, Pierce counties:

In 2019 there was a total count of **17,329** Trumpeter Swans, a decline for the second year. The 2018 swan count was 18,481. The 2017 swan count was 19,982. ♦



Swan mortality. Photo by Margaret Smith

# Oregon Restoration Project: tracking wintering swans

## *Project to track nesting grounds and migration routes of Oregon wintering Trumpeter Swans*

The Oregon Restoration Project began in 2009. Partners include TTSS, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sunriver Nature Center, Aspen Lakes Golf Course, and Pronghorn Golf Club. Past *Trumpetings* have reported on swan releases taking place at Summer Lake Wildlife Area to restore breeding swans to Oregon. However, Summer Lake is also a wintering and staging site for a growing number of Trumpeter Swans. Over 400 Trumpeter Swans were surveyed in February at Summer Lake Wildlife Area as they stopped there on their northward trek.

It is not clear whether swans wintering in eastern Oregon and eastern Washington belong to Trumpeter Swans of the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) or the Pacific Coast Population (PCP). One of the tasks listed in the Pacific Flyway's Management Plan, which includes both Populations, is for agencies to analyze genetic samples from these wintering swans to learn their genetic origin and mark a sample with transmitters to document wintering sites, migration pathways and breeding locations.

Thanks to funding from ODFW, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and TTSS (including funding from Tracy Aviary in Salt Lake City, Utah), five satellite transmitters were purchased for tracking wintering/spring migrant Trumpeter Swans at Summer Lake Wildlife Area.

Severe February weather delayed capture to March. An adult male Trumpeter Swan was the only one successfully captured and collared on March 7. The Project plans to attempt capturing and collaring more swans next winter.

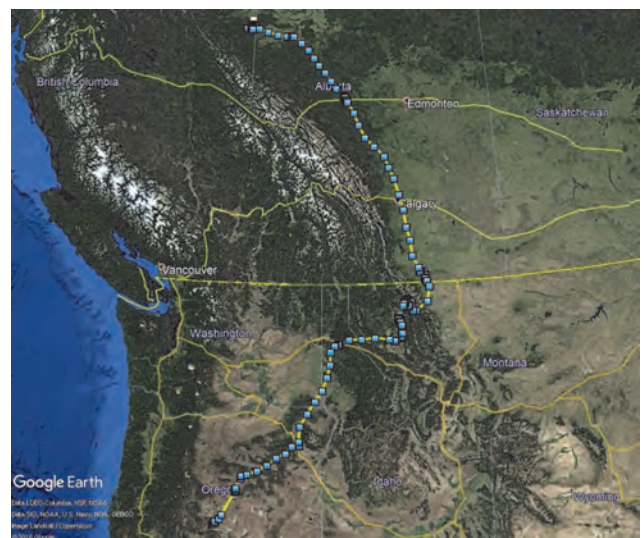
This male Trumpeter Swan's journey from Summer Lake Wildlife Area in southeastern Oregon to Canada is incredible. So far, his travels seem to indicate he is affiliated with breeding regions of the RMP.

He was captured and collared March 7 on the Summer Lake Wildlife Area, took off a few days later and by April 1 was in northeast British Columbia, just across the border from Alberta. On his way from Summer Lake to British Columbia, he spent time on Oregon's South Fork Crooked River and Thief Valley Reservoir, Idaho's wetlands east of Coeur d'Alene, Montana's Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park, and Alberta's southern prairies. Since April 8, he's confined his movements to a wetland chain near Swan Lake by Tupper, British Columbia (near the Alberta border), suggesting this may be where he'll spend the summer. It's also possible this is just a stop on his way further north into the wilds of northwest Canada. ♦



Above: The male Trumpeter Swan was released on March 8 at Summer Lake Wildlife Area by Martin St. Louis, ODFW. The swan has a (white) transmitter collar for GPS tracking. Photo by Gary Ivey

Below: Blue dots show the satellite locations of the male swan during his first 30 days beginning at Summer Lake (lower left) in Oregon to the April 8 sightings at Swan Lake near Tupper, British Columbia. Source: Google Earth



# Trumpeter Watch Highlights – How you are making a difference

## Highlights from this winter's Trumpeter Watch Reports



Above: *Beemer's Pond, west of Webster City, Iowa, is an important Iowa wintering site.* Photo by Ned Martin

New locations of Trumpeter Swans were reported this winter season. Thank you to all who submitted online Trumpeter Watch reports. You are recording history as it is happening. We received many beautiful photos documenting sightings. The photos were especially helpful documenting swan species and collar and wing tag information. Here are a few highlights from the many Trumpeter Watch reports we received this winter season.



**Pennsylvania:** In 2018 Pennsylvania birders reported the **first successful nesting pair** in the state, in Jefferson County. The swan parents, Z603 (12 year old female) and Z675 (5 year old male) were banded through Virginia's Environmental Studies on the Piedmont swan program (now part of the Clifton Institute). One cygnet hatched and fledged.

In mid-February, 2019, we received a Trumpeter Watch report and photo (left) by Pam Illig who reported the family on a pond in Blair County, near Yellow Springs.



**New Hampshire: First documented state sighting** at Abe Emerson Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, Candia. From Ebird: "Found on 4/13 by Kevin Murphy and incorrectly ID'd as Tundra Swan. Relocated on 4/14 by Leo McKillop and correctly ID'd as Trumpeter. Seen by many. Apparently seen out of water and not banded." We received Trumpeter Watch reports and photos about this special swan including this photo by Jeannie Duval.

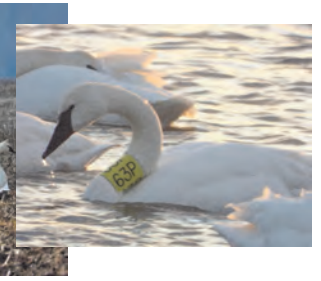


**Montana** female swan 7A8 (red collared swan, left) was reported and photographed in mid-February by Rod Stamm on the Clark Fork River just west of Paradise, Montana. The Blackfoot Challenge program collared and released 7A8 in 2012 and reports, "The fact that this bird is wintering with other birds near the Mission Valley of Montana and with birds from the CSKT [Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes] release program may be great news for **connectivity between the Canadian birds, CSKT birds and the Blackfoot birds.**" 7A8 spent two winters in Idaho before showing up at Kimberly, British Columbia during nesting season. She returned to BC with a mate the next two years (but they did not nest) and then showed up alone. In 2018 she showed up in BC with a mate and they nested, although their four cygnets disappeared shortly after hatch. Thanks to Rod Stamm's sighting, we know this Blackfoot Challenge swan is wintering in Montana with what appears to be a possible mate from the CSKT restoration program!

## Trumpeter Watch Highlights (cont.)

It's been exciting to see where swans are finding new wintering areas. We added 3 National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) to our list of Refuges with Trumpeter Swans: Clarence Cannon NWR, Emiquon NWR, and Reelfoot NWR.

Wisconsin yellow-collared swans were reported in new areas of Illinois and Indiana. Ontario yellow wing-tagged swans were seen beyond the province in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Michigan and New York. Other Trumpeter Swans were reported in new areas of Alberta, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Ontario, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. The Audubon Center at Riverlands in Missouri continued its Great Rivers Trumpeter Watch and recorded many returning Wisconsin collared Trumpeter Swans.



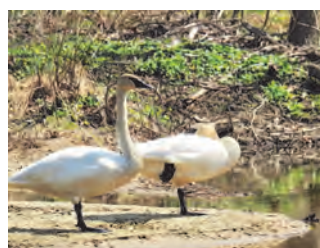
**Illinois:** We received sightings of new areas in Illinois where swans are being seen, including Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge. Harvested corn fields, old mining pits, and rivers and wetlands were the most common areas of sightings. Photos (left, right): Terrence O'Rourke, Linda Martin.

**Indiana:** Hundreds of Trumpeter Swans were spotted in mid December in west central Indiana by Margie Allee (photo, left). Many Wisconsin collared swans were reported in the state. Photo (right) by Cindy Pile.



**Washington:** Many sightings, including swan K13 who was rehabbed in Washington, released as a juvenile in March 2017, and reported and photographed by Suzy Wright in late March in Quesnel, BC. Washington banded swan M27 (left) is at least 12 years old and was reported near Vanderhoof, BC by Dan and Helen Dunlop.

**Nebraska** red-collared swans were reported in the state through Trumpeter Watch. Photo by Colleen Childers



**Texas:** Trumpeter Swan pair at Lake Fork Reservoir, 65 miles east of Dallas in late January. Photo by Barrett Lewis

**Kentucky/Tennessee:** Julie Markham reported Trumpeter Swans outside Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge. Photo confirming swans in the refuge by Tara Dowdy

**Maryland:** Many sightings including two "First Sightings" in Howard County. Photo by Kurt Schwarz

**Ontario.** We received many reports of Ontario wing tagged swans including this leucistic swan T64 (note orange legs) near Toronto. Photo by Carolyn Stampeen

## Getting to meet you in Iowa

### *Swan Soiree in Des Moines, Iowa*

Cold weather didn't faze the many people participating in the Central Iowa Swan Soiree held at Walnut Woods State Park near Des Moines in late January. The all-day event featured presentations, kids' hands-on activities, outdoor viewing of swans, and the highlight event, a "meet and greet" with a Trumpeter Swan.

It was an honor to participate in this wonderful event and to meet many enthusiastic Iowans who came to learn more about wetland conservation and the return of Trumpeter Swans to Iowa. ♦

Top right: A Trumpeter Swan, part of Iowa's captive breeding program,\* was the star of the Soiree. Bottom right: Iowa DNR (and TTSS Vice President) Dave Hoffman showed the swan's wingspan to an enthralled audience of children and adults.

\*This swan's home is the **Clear Creek Outdoor Classroom**, located about 50 yards from a Clear Lake, Iowa elementary school. This outdoor wetland classroom has been used for at least 25 years by Clear Lake elementary schools to learn about wetlands and prairies. The current pair of swans are superb foster parents, "adopting" orphaned cygnets. Photos by Margaret Smith



## Saying farewell



We sadly report Board member Richard "Perk" Perkins passed away April 6, 2019.

Perk was a TTSS member for 28 years and a board member since January 2018. He was a strong supporter of Trumpeter Swan conservation. Perk was an avid antique decoy collector and worked to help connect TTSS with the decoy collecting community.

Perk had over 50 years' experience in the investment business and provided investment advice to both domestic and foreign institutions. He founded Perkins Capital Management, Inc., in 1984 and was President of Perkins Foundation and Perkins and Partners, Inc.



He was proud and delighted to point out the life-size carving of a flying Trumpeter Swan hanging from the ceiling which greeted visitors to his firm.

Perk was a warm, generous and thoughtful person who loved Trumpeter Swans and was proud to be a member of the Society and the Board of Directors. We will miss him. ♦



## Flyway meetings updates

**Mississippi Flyway:** Executive Director Margaret Smith participated in the February Swan Committee meeting. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has not yet issued the Interior Population General Swan Hunting Season Environmental Assessment.

**2020 North American Trumpeter Swan Survey:** The Mississippi Flyway Swan Committee received an update from the USFWS that a committee will be coordinating the effort with states and the USFWS. There was also input from states and provinces expressing intent of participating in the range-wide Trumpeter Swan Survey.

**Interior Population (IP) Management Plan for Trumpeter Swans:** Initial steps took place to update the 1998 Interior Population Trumpeter Swan Management Plan, including developing draft topics for the plan. The Central and Mississippi Flyways agreed to participate in the IP Plan.

**National Flyway Council Meeting:** Each year all four flyway councils meet at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference as does the National Flyway Council (NFC). This year Senior Conservation Advisor Dr. John Cornely presented a Trumpeter Swan update to the NFC.

He requested Swan Conference sponsorships from all 4 flyways and the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi approved motions to become sponsors. He invited all to attend and consider making presentations. Dr. David Cobb, Wildlife Management Chief of North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission indicated an interest in his agency being a sponsor.

All were reminded that 2020 will be the range-wide survey year and were urged to participate. The three eastern flyways were reminded of the importance of the revision of the 20-year-old Interior Population Plan. Dr. Paul Padding related the Atlantic Flyway had voted unanimously to participate in the planning process. ♦

## TTSS recognition and awards



The April 9, 2019 New York Times published an article, “[The Comeback of the Trumpeter Swans](#)” by Karen Weintraub. The article featured the return of Trumpeter Swans to Ontario led by Harry Lumsden and interviews with him and Beverly Kingdon (both TTSS members). The article briefly highlighted the successes and continuing issues Trumpeter Swans face in different parts of North America, with comments from interviews with TTSS Executive Director, Margaret Smith and TTSS Past President, Dr. Gary Ivey.



The Trumpeter Swan Society was recognized for our transparency with a **2019 Gold Seal on our [GuideStar Nonprofit Profile](#)**! We received our first Gold Seal of Transparency in 2018. 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 early 2019, The Trumpeter Swan Society was named a **Constant Contact All Star Award** for 2018. Thanks go to our *Enewsletter* subscribers for reading and responding to our *Enewsletters*! The annual award recognizes the most successful 10 percent of Constant Contact’s customer base. ♦

## Member Corner

### Swans Among Us

Swans are sleeping by the shore,  
Plumes folded misty white;  
They awaken, just before  
Jeweled sun sheds wintry light.

They trumpet brass and gold,  
The pale morning rings;  
Fog heaves in the cold,  
The river snaps and sings.

The swans are wary, black eyes  
Keeping watch the silvery day;  
With beating wings they rise  
Over glittering waters away.

Theirs the green countryside,  
Shining lake, russet hill;  
The swan scorns to hide  
Behind clouds low and chill.

White wings at swanfall,  
In scarlet evening the swans return;  
They jostle, settle and call,  
Soon white stars will burn.

Close among reeds the nest,  
And vigils that leave no trace;  
Stick-feathered cygnets at the breast  
Will remember this place.

~ Cameron La Follette  
Salem, Oregon  
TTSS member

# Become a monthly sustainer!

## Monthly Donation Authorization Form:

**Yes, I would like to make a Monthly Gift.**

I authorize *The Trumpeter Swan Society* to electronically debit my account monthly on the [date (e.g. 15th) \_\_\_\_\_] of each month as follows:

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Your gift will be ongoing until you change or cancel it by contacting our organization directly.

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Making a donation using direct withdrawal via ACH from your checking or savings is fast, easy, and secure.

**It's simple, safe, and saves money. It reduces our costs** so you help swans even more.

*A gift to TTSS in your will or estate plan helps Trumpeter Swans for generations to come*



*I support Trumpeter Swan conservation.*

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Donate securely **online** through credit card or ACH at [www.trumpeterswansociety.org](http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org)

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**Swan Conference Sponsorship** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



Look inside for these stories. Left: *Pennsylvania reported its first documented successful nesting pair.* Photo of swan family by Pam Illig. Right: *Trumpeter Swans lost a champion with the passing of Rod King who led egg collection trips to Alaska by state agencies for their swan restoration programs.* Photo by Carol Henderson, MN Department of Natural Resources

**TRUMPETINGS EDITORS**

John Cornely, Gary Ivey, Carey Smith, Margaret Smith

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