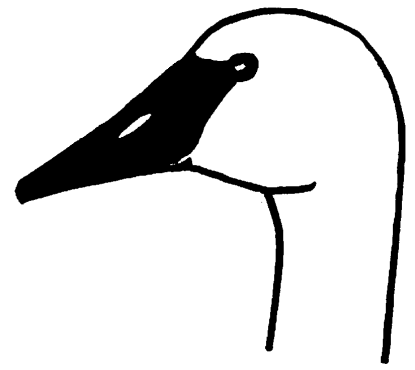


# TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society  
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Vol. XIV. No. 2

July 2004

**FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - Your Help Is Needed.** As Trumpeters continue their recovery, there will be some bumps in the road. Across much of their range, protecting key habitats and rebuilding secure winter distributions are long-term efforts needed to ensure secure populations. While efforts to meet those needs are ongoing, we face other immediate problems that require effective responses. Winter mortality from lead poisoning is continuing to increase along the Washington-British Columbia border and is reaching levels that could impact the growth of the Pacific Coast Population. In Greater Yellowstone, where the breeding population is struggling to survive, continued drought, prolific development of rural areas, and the small size and diminished distribution of this group combine to make its future uncertain.

These two significant problems will be high priorities for TTSS until they are solved. To address the lead poisoning crisis we are working to help increase agency budgets and private funding, mobilize needed volunteers, and help provide equipment to aid in the search for the source of the lead shot that the swans are consuming. We are also working to halt the ongoing use of lead shot in waterfowl feeding habitats. In Greater Yellowstone, we are working to improve habitat conditions at important nesting areas in Montana's Centennial Valley, to identify causes of nest failure in Idaho, and to find ways to improve water management at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge so that it can contribute to population recovery. We are also developing an interpretive program with regional zoos to help increase public understanding of the threats to this population's survival.

While we must focus our efforts on these highest priority threats, we also continue our "routine" programs – working to improve population distributions and protect swan habitats, producing our publications and website, answering requests for information, following all agency projects and proposals that would impact Trumpeters, and planning for our 20<sup>th</sup> Conference. We accomplish all this with part-time employees and many hours of volunteer service from our Board and members.

In our 2004-09 Strategic Plan, to ensure the financial health of TTSS we adopted the objective of ending the year with budget reserves equal to the coming year's general operations budget (approximately \$50,000).

Currently, we are at about 40% of our target and need to raise \$30,000 in the next 5 months to meet our objective. By building our reserves, we will be able to focus more time on our projects and have more lead time to seek grants for special projects and for general operations.

Fundraising has become more challenging in these times of economic instability and upcoming national elections. To be successful in our programs, we need your financial support. If you have expertise in fundraising and would be willing to assist us, that would be most welcome, also. Please contact our main office if you would like to help us.

Ruth Shea

**20<sup>TH</sup> TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY CONFERENCE –** Mark your calendars for the next Society Conference to be held in Council Bluffs, Iowa, co-hosted by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in October 2005. More details will follow in the next issue of *Trumpetings* and on our web site. Council Bluffs is only 10 minutes from the Omaha, Nebraska, International airport. While the focus of this conference will be the challenges facing the Interior Population of Trumpeter Swans, we invite submission of papers covering the other North American swan populations and species.

**19<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE -** The Selected Papers of the 19<sup>th</sup> TTSS Conference held in Richmond, British Columbia, in February 2003 is now in print. Copies were recently mailed to prepaid Conference registrants. In addition, copies will be sent to current TTSS members who request them. So, be sure to check that you are up to date on your membership and then e-mail, call or drop a card to the office. We will be happy to send one out to you. We are sure you will find the 32 papers and abstracts on the Pacific, Rocky Mountain, and Interior Populations of Trumpeter Swans as well as presentations on Tundra and Mute Swans to be very informative.

## **PACIFIC COAST POPULATION NEWS -**

**Hines Marsh** – Director Martha Jordan is leading a project to protect the water supply at Hines Marsh, on Washington's Long Beach Peninsula. TTSS has worked

for years to save this interdunal wetland and to restore its suitability for wintering swans. This project, funded by a grant from the Northwest Fund for the Environment, will bring multiple partners together to ensure that the quality and quantity of water has adequate protection.

**Get the Lead Out!** - In addition to working with agencies to try to identify the source of the lead shot that is killing increasing numbers of wintering Trumpeter Swans in western Washington and British Columbia, we are also working to curtail additional lead shot deposition. Although lead shot has been banned in the U. S. and Canada for use in waterfowl hunting, new lead continues to accumulate annually in swan feeding areas in western Washington. In addition to illegal use, lead is still legally used by upland bird hunters in fields that are subsequently flooded, by dog trainers, for target practice, and by trap and skeet ranges. With leadership from Director Martha Jordan, TTSS will be working with agencies and private partners to educate the public regarding the dangers of spent lead shot and to curtail the uses of lead in waterfowl feeding habitats. This program is funded by a grant to TTSS from the Charlotte Martin Foundation.

#### **ROCKY MOUNTAIN POPULATION NEWS -**

**Montana** - When Tribal, State, and Federal Wildlife Biologists commenced discussions of reintroducing the locally-extinct Trumpeter Swan to the Flathead Indian Reservation, they looked forward to the day when swans released into the wild would nest and produce cygnets.

That vision was recently attained when the first Trumpeter Swans to nest successfully on the Reservation in decades produced eggs at a large wetland located on a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Wildlife Management Area near Charlo, Montana. In early June, the four eggs hatched. The cygnets are growing rapidly as they feed on the rich emergent vegetation at their wetland home.

Results of another nesting attempt by a second pair of Trumpeters that nested at a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Production Area nearby were more disappointing. Although this pair produced at least three eggs and incubated them fully, the eggs did not hatch. Biologists are hopeful that the pair will survive and produce cygnets next summer. A third pair of swans also paired for the summer, but did not nest.

The adult swans originated at a captive propagation facility operated by the Trumpeter Swan Fund of Jackson, Wyoming. They were hatched and reared by captive swans for the Flathead Indian Reservation Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Project in 2001. The birds were released at Pablo National Wildlife Refuge and at the Crow Waterfowl Production Area in 2002.

Captive propagation efforts have also had a successful season. One pair of swans housed at the Montana Waterfowl Foundation near Pablo produced seven eggs, six of which hatched in mid-June. The Trumpeter Swan

Fund has also produced a large number of cygnets for reintroduction projects in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana.

Accounts of nesting Trumpeters in western Montana are limited. One of the earliest reports was noted by Father Jean DeSmet in 1842 when he accompanied an Indian hunting party along the shores of Flathead Lake and reported the collecting of swan eggs for food. Subsequent observations of nesting Trumpeters were reported in the late 1800s by other early naturalists in other areas of the Flathead River drainage and elsewhere in western Montana.

While most of the earlier limiting factors have since ceased, Trumpeters are not yet secure. The most significant cause of mortality for wild swans is collision with overhead utility lines. Tribal Wildlife Biologists have been working closely with Mission Valley Power to install devices known as swan flight diverters on lines where collisions have occurred. Two types of these diverters are being installed. The first is a hard plastic spiral that fits tightly onto the line and adds more visibility to the line. The second type is called a Firefly. It clips onto the line and has a piece of rectangular Plexiglas attached to it that dangles below the line. Pieces of light-gathering material gather sunlight during the daytime and then are also visible under low light conditions.

Dale Becker

**Idaho nesting** - Again this year, TTSS monitored all swan nests in eastern Idaho with financial support from the U.S. Forest Service. Aerial surveys in May and June documented 10 active nests north of Idaho Falls. In addition, USFWS documented seven active nests in the Grays Lake – Bear Lake vicinity. The total of only 17 nests is down substantially from the 23 found in 2003, with the losses occurring primarily in Island Park. As of early July, 28 cygnets were known to have hatched from 7 nests. Four nests were confirmed to have failed and the fates of six nests at Grays Lake NWR are unknown. Because of inadequate water at Grays Lake, USFWS salvaged 20 eggs from nests during incubation and are captive rearing these for future release at Bear Lake NWR in the southeast corner of Idaho. One egg was left in each of the six salvaged nests. USFWS was unable to fly to document hatching success due to budget cuts. The Idaho nesting flock appears to have lost several breeding pairs in Island Park during the past winter and its productivity continues to be impaired by drought and the serious water rights problems at Grays Lake.

**Grays Lake NWR, Idaho** – Although Idaho's first record of Trumpeter Swans occurred at Grays Lake in 1859, today this 23,000-acre marsh has been heavily damaged by a century of irrigation water withdrawals. An additional 20+ miles of stream channels and 2,500+ wetland acres in two adjacent watersheds have also been damaged. The situation is complex, but there is great potential to improve the situation if key parties can be brought together. Executive Director Ruth Shea, who lives at Grays Lake, is working with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, various federal, state, and county

resource agencies, and regional conservation groups to launch a process to identify possible solutions. The group will attempt to identify water management options that could fulfill valid water rights with much less environmental damage and find ways to begin to repair past damage.

### **Elk Island National Park, Alberta**

Rob Kaye of Parks Canada flew an aerial survey on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004 and observed 26 Trumpeters, including four breeding pairs in the Elk Island National Park (EINP) area of the Beaverhills ecosystem. So far, 11 cygnets have hatched, bringing the total number of swans to 37. Trumpeters were originally introduced to EINP, but are slowly expanding their range outside the Park to other provincial parks and onto remote lakes on private lands. A total of six Trumpeters was observed in 1998, but numbers have steadily increased due to the establishment of breeding pairs and return of offspring. Since the breeding swans are all in remote areas, Rob suggests Park visitors may be able to view Trumpeters staging in the fall before migration on Astotin Lake.

### **INTERIOR POPULATION NEWS -**

Sumner Matteson, Avian Ecologist with the **Wisconsin** DNR, reports that Wisconsin has documented 77 nesting pairs of Trumpeters so far within the state this year. However, there also has been a loss of several breeding adults, with at least 2-3 from power line collisions. A meeting with Alliant Energy is scheduled soon to discuss options for marking power lines to protect nesting territories.

Dave Sherman, Restoration Coordinator in **Ohio**, reports that Ohio had a great production year in 2004. Ohio achieved its goal of 15 breeding pairs 2 years ahead of schedule. Only 13 of the 15 nests were successful, but they produced 50 young. Also, Dave is working with a private landowner who had a free-flying Trumpeter land on her property and mate with a captive Mute Swan, producing two hybrids. Efforts are being made to place the hybrids in a study and to prevent future breeding.

Robert A. Evans, Wildlife Biologist in the Ottawa National Forest in Northwestern **Michigan**, reports successful reproduction of Trumpeters and more sightings of yearling swans. A Wisconsin-banded Trumpeter produced a brood of five cygnets with its Michigan mate for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year southeast of Marenisco, close to the Wisconsin border. It appears that swans in this location prefer remote creeks with small beaver ponds over larger shallow marshes. Swan enthusiasts should visit the updated Kellogg Biological Station Bird

Sanctuary, Michigan State University, swan research website at: [www.kbs.msu.edu/Bird\\_Sanctuary/Swans](http://www.kbs.msu.edu/Bird_Sanctuary/Swans).

**Three Rivers Park District**, Minnesota, recorded a record number of 15 territorial pairs within its boundaries, but only 9 pairs still have cygnets. The cool and very wet June may have taken its toll. To the west of the Park District, a brood of nine cygnets was observed by TTSS member Arnie Fredrickson who has been volunteering for the Park District to survey nesting marshes.

**Ontario** - Harry Lumsden noted that it is still too early to estimate nesting success in Ontario for the season, but interesting behavior has been observed. Some of the breeding pairs have demonstrated that they will accept nests anchored on rafts. One pair nested on such a site placed in the middle of a busy marina. The pair hatched five cygnets two of which were of the white colour phase. The cob killed one, but the other is growing well. This pair is a favourite with the boat owners in the marina. The male will not tolerate Canada Geese, chasing them off at every opportunity. Thus, no excrement on docks and hulls. It seems that Trumpeters can adapt to park life as well as the Mute Swans have done.

### **DIRECTOR DALE BECKER SELECTED MONTANA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST OF THE YEAR -**

Dale Becker, Wildlife Management Program Manager for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, was selected as Montana Wildlife Biologist of the Year at the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society meeting in Bozeman. Dale has been the Wildlife Program Manager for the Tribes for 14 years. Prior to that, he spent 4 years conducting research on Bald Eagles and Ospreys on the Reservation in preparation for wildlife mitigation related to the impacts of the Kerr Dam. Dale has been a strong advocate for reintroducing native species, including Peregrine Falcons and Trumpeter Swans, to the Reservation. Congratulations, Dale!

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!** - Next winter's effort to locate the source of the lead that is killing Trumpeters in western Washington will involve a tremendous amount of following the movements and feeding activity of neckbanded and radioed swans. TTSS will be coordinating volunteers to assist in this effort. If you might be interested in spending several weeks in that region between November-February, to read neckbands, please contact Ruth Shea ([ruthshea@srv.net](mailto:ruthshea@srv.net)).

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### **WANT TO BE A MEMBER? NEED TO RENEW? GIFT SUGGESTION?**

Student/Retired\_\_\$15 Regular\_\_\$25 Family\_\_\$30 Organization\_\_\$50 Supporting\_\_\$100 Life Member\_\_ \$500

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**WELCOME ALL!**

**TTSS WISHLIST!** – TTSS would welcome a new or used Power Point projector in good condition to help with public presentations for our *Get the Lead Out* Project. If you would like to donate a projector or contribute to its purchase, please contact Ruth Shea at [ruthshea@srv.net](mailto:ruthshea@srv.net).

**TRUMPETER SWANS FOR SALE** – Joe Johnson at the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary, Michigan State University, has 1 and 2-year old Trumpeters for sale. Most of the birds are wing clipped, but a few are pinioned. Please contact Joe at 269-671-2511 or at [CZINDERS@kbs.msu.edu](mailto:CZINDERS@kbs.msu.edu) for more details.