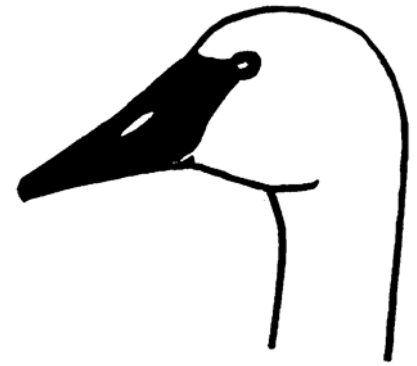




TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

Now that the warm weather is here, why not order your Trumpeter Swan T-shirt? The shirts are made from cool, white 100% cotton with our 3-color logo showing two Trumpeter Swans flying. It's a great way to support your Society and to spark a conversation about the majestic trumpeters! Check out our website to see our other gift items. Also, remember that we have a new mailing address. Our telephone number and e-mail address remain the same.

At its June 15, 2006, meeting, the TTSS Board voted to sign on as a member of the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition. Teaming with Wildlife is a coalition of more than 3,500 organizations working to support increased state and federal funding for wildlife conservation. By joining the Coalition, TTSS hopes to work with states and tribes to integrate Trumpeter Swan conservation into wildlife conservation strategies and action plans. To learn more about the partners and to read about wildlife funding updates, visit the Teaming with Wildlife Web site at: <http://www.teaming.com>

Ruth Shea

Comparison of Trumpeter Swan Populations using Nuclear and Mitochondrial Genetic Markers

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ABSTRACT: For management purposes, the natural range of the trumpeter swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) has been divided into two populations, the Pacific Coast Population (PP) and the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP). Little is known about the distribution of genetic variation across the species' range despite increasing pressure to make difficult management decisions regarding the two populations and flocks within them. Of particular interest are the identification of any unique population or flock and a comparison of genetic diversity across the range. To address these issues, we used rapidly evolving genetic markers (mitochondrial DNA sequence and data from 17 nuclear microsatellites) to screen samples collected from across the species' range. Data from both markers revealed a significant difference between the PP and RMP with the Yukon

Territory as a likely area of overlap. Additionally, we found that the two populations have somewhat similar levels of genetic diversity (PP is slightly higher) suggesting that like the RMP, the PP underwent a genetic bottleneck resulting from population declines. Both genetic structure and diversity results reveal that the Tri-State flock is not genetically different from the Canadian flock of the RMP and need not be treated as a unique population from a genetic standpoint. Additionally, trumpeter swans appear to have much lower mitochondrial DNA variability than other waterfowl studied thus far suggesting a previous, species-wide bottleneck.

PACIFIC COAST POPULATION NEWS

Pacific Northwest lead poisoning funding shortfall

Planning is now underway for next winter's response to the lead poisoning problems along the Washington State - British Columbia border. Once again last winter, over 400 swans died from lead poisoning. The data collected have identified several suspect areas that could be poisoning the birds. This coming winter the project partners hope to more thoroughly analyze all the data that have been collected to look for anything that might have been missed, monitor the population, pickup as many stricken swans as possible, and haze swans to prevent them from using one particular site that was found to contain high levels of lead pellets.

Currently, however, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Canadian Wildlife Service have not budgeted adequate funds for these tasks and about \$63,000 is still needed. TTSS will be working with the agencies, the Washington State congressional delegation, and private foundations to try to obtain sufficient funds so that the key tasks can be accomplished effectively.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Blackfoot Valley, Montana

Tom Hinz, Coordinator of Montana Wetlands Legacy (www.wetlandslegacy.org) reports efforts to restore nesting Trumpeter Swans to the Blackfoot Valley of western Montana are continuing. The Partners of the Blackfoot Valley Trumpeter Swan Project released 17 trumpeters on June 3. Five went to Kleinschmidt Lake

Waterfowl Production Area, five to Wigeon Marsh on a private ranch, and seven went to the same wetland where the initial group of 10 swans was released last year. During the first month after release, no mortalities have been detected. However, only two of last year's birds are known to be alive. One is in the Blackfoot Valley and one in the Flathead Valley. Three birds were reported dead. Five of the birds are still unaccounted for, having not been reported by anyone for 7 months. Released swans are marked with red collars with white characters with the format "number P number". If anyone observes these birds, please report the sighting to Tom at THinz@mt.gov or 406-994-7889.

Trumpeter Swan Restoration at Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Idaho

In response to continuous poor recruitment at Grays Lake NWR, the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex staff, in cooperation with the U. S. FWS's Office of Migratory Bird Management, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and the Wyoming Wetland Society (WWS), began to salvage Trumpeter Swan eggs, and captive-rear cygnets to yearling age at WWS facilities. These yearlings were then released at Bear Lake NWR near Montpelier, Idaho.

Most of the problems at Grays Lake are believed to be associated with water withdrawals for irrigation before cygnets can fledge. Bear Lake NWR has an abundance of water and submerged aquatic vegetation. A single pair of Trumpeter Swans has been nesting there since the late 1990s, but production has been extremely low and local flock growth nonexistent. Bear Lake NWR is also very close to potential wintering sites, and has resident swans to act as "mentors" or guides.

Since 2002, IDFG, WWS, and USFWS have released 52 Trumpeter Swans [cygnets(2);yearlings(48); 2-year old (2)] on Bear Lake NWR. All swans, except the two cygnets, were collared and banded. Our original goal was to have 3 - 5 nesting pairs on the Refuge. There were at least three territorial pairs on the Refuge in May 2006, and three potential nest platforms were identified with swans in incubation posture. One new nest on the Refuge tour route hatched six cygnets. One other possible new nest site was investigated, but we were unable to verify. It is possible that the swans hatched and moved their brood into an inaccessible portion of the marsh. The third nest site is also very difficult to access from the ground. This site has been used by the lone resident pair in the past. We will have to wait for an aerial survey to determine success.

Despite the salvage operation, nest numbers at Grays Lake have so far remained at 7-9/year, with a summering white bird flock of 20-23 birds. Egg salvage will continue from at-risk swan nests at Grays Lake. We hope to move translocation efforts to another southeastern Idaho site in 2007. We will conduct habitat evaluations at several potential sites this summer.

We thank the IDFG for their cooperation and assistance, the USFWS Pacific Flyway Representative and Regional Migratory Bird Coordinator for funding and support, WWS for its commitment to hatching and raising swans

for these releases, and the Refuge Managers for creating and managing excellent habitat at Bear Lake NWR.

Carl Mitchell, Grays Lake NWR

INTERIOR POPULATION NEWS

High Plains Trumpeter Swan Management Plan

This spring the Central Flyway approved an updated version of the High Plains Flock (HPF) Trumpeter Swan Management Plan which outlines management for the next 10 years. The last Trumpeter Swan management plan was completed in 1982 when it was referred to as the Lacreek Flock. The goal of the updated plan is to maintain and perpetuate a self-sustaining, migratory flock of Trumpeter Swans in the High Plains. The objectives include: 1) develop a dispersed population consisting of at least 500 total birds counted during the production survey and 50 successful breeding pairs by 2010; 2) identify new nesting, migration, and wintering sites and monitor known sites to ensure these habitats will support the maintenance and expansion of the HPF to successfully achieve the population goal by 2010; 3) provide wintering habitat dispersed among 10 different locations in South Dakota and Nebraska for up to 600 Trumpeter Swans; and 4) reduce known mortality factors within the current range of the HPF and investigate factors that could limit expansion within its historical range by 2020.

Some of the strategies identified to accomplish these objectives are to continue population monitoring, determining nesting and wintering areas outside the known range, providing high quality forage at known overwintering areas, encouraging migration through the use of water management, and reducing lead poisoning and human influenced mortality i.e. collisions with electrical wires.

Shilo Comeau, Lacreek NWR

News from Seney National Wildlife Refuge, Michigan

Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is having another great Trumpeter Swan breeding season. We have an all time high with 29 nesting pairs that have hatched 80 cygnets. Average clutch size was six eggs per nest with one nest having a maximum of nine eggs and another nest having a minimum of three. To date we have 33 cygnets left and a total of 200 white birds. This year, Seney NWR is conducting a research project to investigate the impacts that the non-breeding swans are having on the aquatic vegetation in the pools. We have set up 10, 5 meter x 5 meter exclosures to keep the swans out of areas of the pools where they could feed. We will take measurements on the vegetation within the exclosures and compare it to control plots. This is a pilot year for this study. If you would like more information on the study, please contact Dave Olson at dave_olson@fws.gov or (906) 586-9851, ext. 12.

First wild Trumpeter Swans hatch in Illinois!

Russell Engelke of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, recently reported to the Iowa DNR that two Iowa-banded Trumpeters hatched two cygnets on a wetland just south of Savanna, Illinois, in mid-June. Savanna is in Carroll County in Northwest Illinois, right across the Mississippi River from Iowa. This is the first wild hatch of Trumpeters in Illinois since the late 1800s. In 2005, Iowa swans also pioneered into Missouri to nest successfully.

Trumpeter Swan survey, western Minneapolis metro

Three Rivers Park District volunteer swan monitor Arnie Fredrickson is conducting swan surveys again this year in Carver, Hennepin, and Wright counties. Arnie began ground checking swan reports for the Park District in 2003, but upgraded to hiring a pilot with a Cessna aircraft in 2004 to obtain more complete information. In 2006, he flew his first survey on 16 May to count swan nests. Two June flights were made to count broods. Arnie follows up with ground checks and will conduct a final aerial survey in September to determine cygnet survival. The number of wetlands to survey continues to increase as swans move west to occupy new sites. So far this season, Arnie documented 49 sites with nests.

Arnie photographed this brood of nine near Hasty, Wright County, Minnesota. This pair has been the most productive, also hatching nine cygnets in 2004.



Let's Get the Lead Out Campaign in Minnesota

Lead fishing sinkers and jigs are poisoning loons, eagles, and swans. Minnesota's Office of Environmental Assistance is educating the public about the dangers to wildlife in the use of lead. Alternatives made from tin, bismuth, steel, and tungsten-nickel alloy are available. More states, Canada and Great Britain are taking steps to reduce the use and sale of lead fishing sinkers. Over the past 3 years, Minnesota anglers have turned in more than 2,500 pounds of lead tackle.

Swans wintering in Hudson, Wisconsin, have succumbed to lead poisoning from lead sinkers. Swallowing just one lead sinker can poison a loon or swan. To find locations where lead tackle can be exchanged for non-toxic alternatives, visit <http://www.moea.state.mn.us/reduce/sinkers.cfm>

A recent visitor to the TTSS website sent in this photo showing a pile of lead fishing tackle collected during one river clean-up in Washington State. Please help spread the word to help get lead out of our environment.



IN MEMORIAM

Henry (Hank) Hansen

TTSS member and swan researcher, Henry (Hank) Hansen died in March 2005. Hank was the senior author of Wildlife Monograph No. 26, *The Trumpeter Swan in Alaska* (1971), along with P. E. K. Shepherd, J. G. King, and W. A. Troyer. Below is an excerpt from the November 2005 Newsletter of the Association of Retired Fish and Wildlife Service Employees.

In 1955, Hank became the first waterfowl biologist for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in Alaska. He also served the FWS in Washington, D. C. and Hawaii. Hank developed a program for monitoring waterfowl populations by aerial survey in Alaska, the same system still used today. He did pioneering work on several species of geese, swans and ducks, authored dozens of technical and popular articles, and received a Meritorious Service and numerous other awards. He retired to Whidbey Island, Washington, in 1979 after 34 years of distinguished state and military service, including earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Bronze Star for flying 75 combat missions in WWII.

Gene Stroops

Gene Stroops, former Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Manager and long time TTSS member, passed away in April 2006. Gene worked in FWS Region 6 for many years and was Refuge Manager at Red Rock Lakes in Montana from 1969 to 1982. Mike Parker, current Manager at Red Rock Lakes, noted that Gene was instrumental in reducing grazing and haying rates at the Refuge to meet wildlife objectives. Gene retired from Red Rock Lakes and settled just outside the Centennial Valley. Often seen in the Valley during the summers watching wildlife and fishing Elk Lake, he had a very strong love for the outdoors, especially the Centennial Valley, a very important habitat for Trumpeter Swans.

WANT TO BE A MEMBER? NEED TO RENEW? GIVE A FRIEND A GIFT?

Student/Retired__\$15 Regular__\$25 Family__\$30 Organization__\$50 Supporting__\$100 Life Member__ \$500 [to Endowment Fund]

Make check/money order payable to TTSS (Canadians please write "in US funds" on personal checks). Mail to:
The Trumpeter Swan Society, 12615 County Road 9 - Suite 100, Plymouth, Minnesota 55441-1248

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WELCOME ALL!



DO YOU HAVE SWANS FOR SALE OR TRADE? Jim Demro, TTSS member from Marengo, Iowa, would like to purchase a male and female Trumpeter Swan. The birds can be related. Please call Jim at 319-741-3214 or e-mail jjdemro@netins.net. The TTSS office occasionally receives e-mails and telephone inquiries from people looking to purchase a captive pair or a mate for a captive swan. Please let us know if you have stock available.

Visit TTSS' World Wide Web site at www.trumpeterswansociety.org