

MICHIGAN 1996 TRUMPETER SWAN UPDATE

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The Michigan program is a portion of a larger Great Lakes region effort to restore 1000 Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*) to the central portion of the United States by the year 2000.

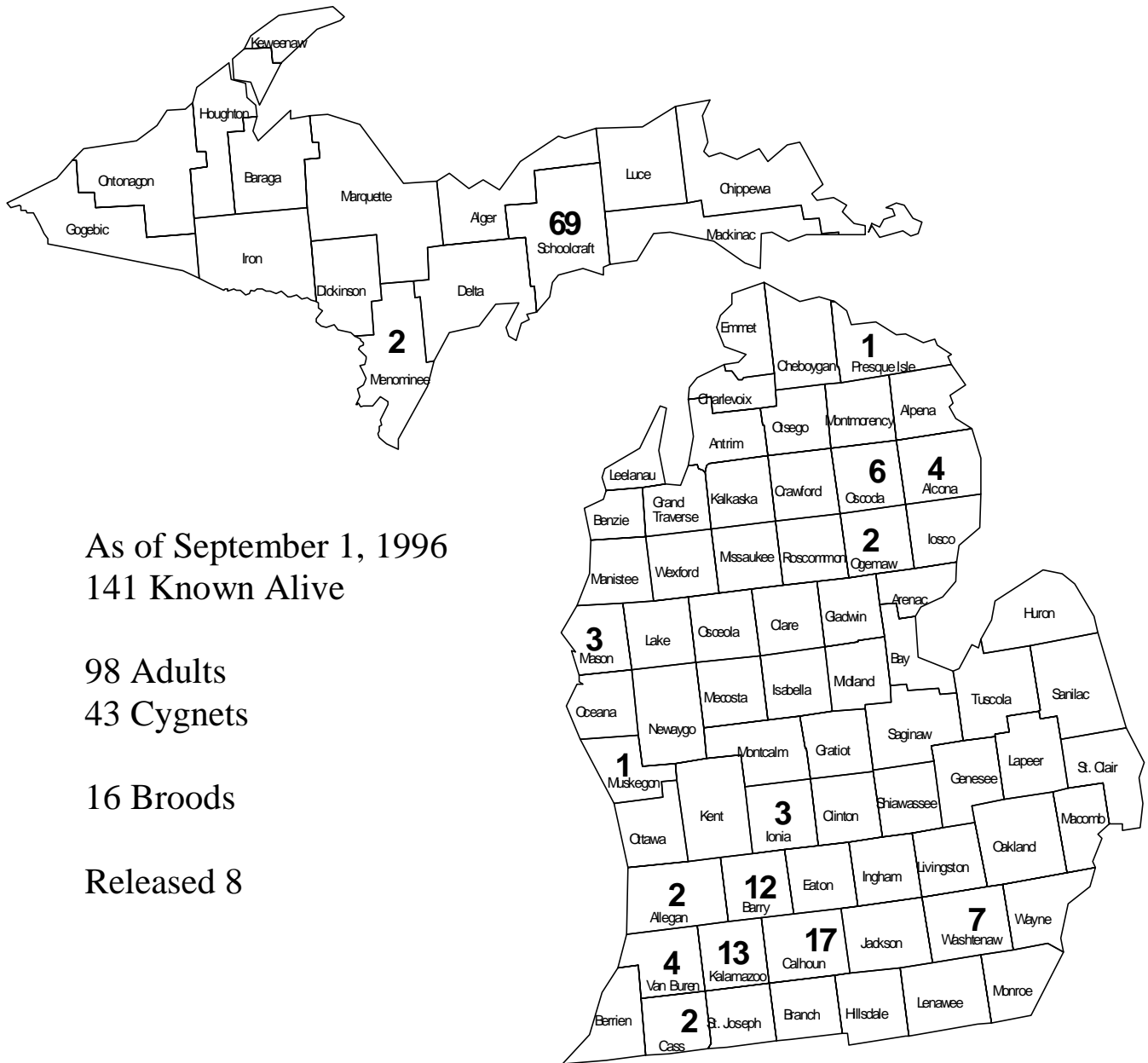
In 1986, a 3 year experiment utilizing Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) as foster parents was begun. A total of 44 viable Trumpeter Swan eggs was placed under Mute Swans. Thirty-one hatched, but only six cygnets fledged. The effort continued with the release of captive-reared 2-year-old Trumpeter Swans from 1989 through 1993. Small releases have occurred each year since, with a total of 137 Trumpeter Swans being released. About half of these were of Alaskan origin. The remainder were from regional zoological parks and private propagators.

The current distribution of Trumpeter Swans in Michigan essentially mirrors the pattern and magnitude of the original releases. The exception is northeastern lower Michigan and central Michigan where Trumpeters have failed to survive in reasonable numbers (Figure 1). The initial releases were relatively small, and mortality, due primarily to

power line collisions and lead poisoning, was higher than anticipated (Figure 2). Our ability as biologists to pick ideal habitat was not always perfect, and the total number of birds released in an area was often too few. The release of six to 10 swans can no longer be recommended.

In Michigan, the first successful nesting of Trumpeter Swans in a century occurred in 1992 when two pairs nested and reared four young. The number of pairs successfully rearing a brood has increased steadily and numbered 16 pairs with 43 young in 1996. Average brood size was 2.69, down from 3.08 cygnets in 13 broods in 1995. Since 1992, 40 successful nesting efforts have resulted in the fledging of 127 cygnets (Figure 3).

A few truly wild Trumpeter Swans have begun to reproduce, with a substantial number potentially entering the breeding segment in the next 2 years. The 1996 fall flight in Michigan was estimated at 141 swans, with 16 successful pairs and 43 cygnets. We are about halfway to our year 2000 goal of 30 nesting pairs and 200 Trumpeter Swans.



As of September 1, 1996
141 Known Alive

98 Adults
43 Cygnets

16 Broods

Released 8

Figure 1. 1996 distribution of Trumpeter Swans in Michigan, estimates by county.

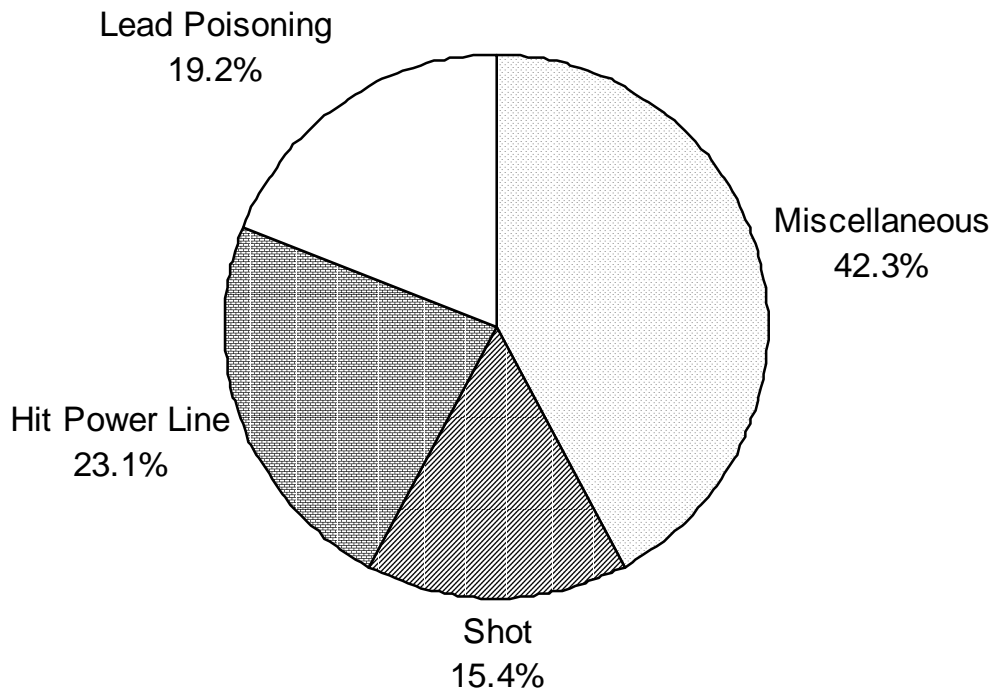


Figure 2. Causes of mortality of Trumpeter Swans in Michigan. Miscellaneous mortality includes enteritis, peritonitis, electrocution, trauma, gout, and unknown causes.

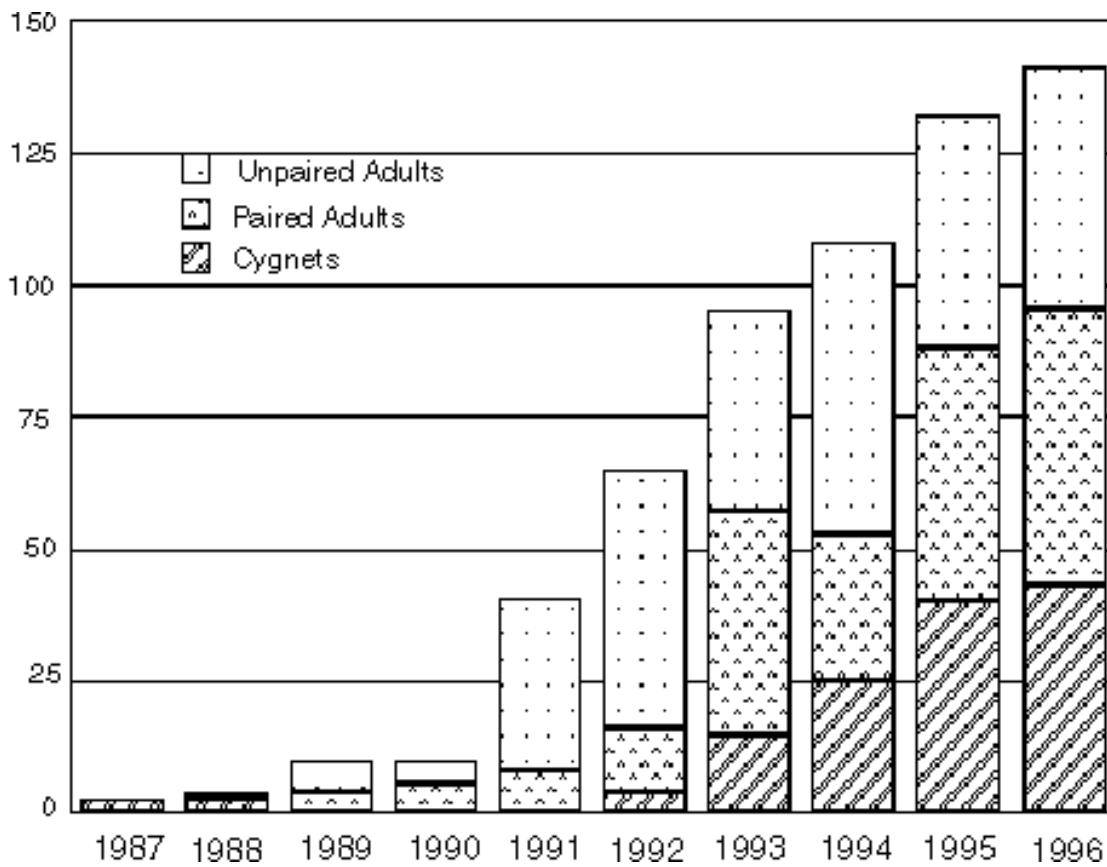


Figure 3. Trumpeter Swan population in Michigan, 1987-1996, by age and mating status.