

DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE INTERIOR POPULATION OF TRUMPETER SWANS

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INTRODUCTION

Several papers in this proceedings share various state, provincial, and private experiences concerning the Interior Population of Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*). Larry Gillette and Donna Compton provided additional information about early restoration efforts. It is obvious that there is a lot going on and considerable progress is being made, but we still need better planning, coordination, and management of this population as we move into the 21st Century. I believe that the best way I can quickly summarize the effort that went into development of the Interior Population Management Plan (IPMP), and the current status, is to present a chronology of significant events. A more detailed historical account of this population of Trumpeter Swans is included in the "Introduction" and "Background" sections of the IPMP.

CHRONOLOGY

1954

One of the earliest attempts to establish a local breeding flock of Trumpeter Swans was at the Delta Waterfowl Research Station in Manitoba during 1954 (Banko 1960). Captive breeding pairs were maintained, and limited production occurred. By 1972-73, three pairs were reported, but the number of swans apparently never became large enough to carry out a broader restoration effort. They eventually disappeared. During this period, other captive breeding programs were started at the Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota and at Hennepin County Parks in Minnesota.

1982

The establishment and expansion of the Lacreek flock proceeded under a management plan developed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and endorsed by the Central Flyway Council. During the period from 1982-87, about 30 birds from the Lacreek flock were moved to the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Missouri. Limited breeding and reproduction occurred, but these swans, too, eventually disappeared.

1984

The North American Management Plan (NAMP) for Trumpeter Swans was completed by the Migratory Bird Management Office, USFWS, with assistance from the flyway councils. It was signed by the Chairman of the Pacific Flyway Council as it pertained to the Pacific Population and Rocky Mountain Population, but deferred to the other flyways pending input on the Interior Population (IP).

1986

The Mississippi Flyway Technical Section, through an ad hoc committee, revised the section on the IP in the NAMP.

1984-94

During the 10 years from 1984-94, Trumpeter Swan restoration efforts proceeded under individual management plans prepared by the states, provinces, and private organizations and approved by the flyway councils.

1994

There was recognition of the need for better coordination of ongoing restoration programs. During September 1994, The Trumpeter Swan Society (TTSS) hosted a meeting in Iowa for interested parties to develop a consensus for future restoration efforts and management of the growing IP. The group recommended the establishment of a Drafting Committee (DC) to prepare a draft management plan for the IP. The DC was to consist of 12 members, three each from the Mississippi and Central Flyways and two each from the USFWS, TTSS, and the private sector. The two flyway councils approved the recommendation, and the appointments were made. The members were Joe Johnson (Michigan), Dave Graber (Missouri), and Sumner Matteson (Wisconsin) for the Mississippi Flyway; Marvin Kraft (Kansas), Spencer Vaa (South Dakota), and Rolf Kraft for the Central Flyway; Jeff Haskins and Steve Wilds for the USFWS Regions; Russ Studebaker (Oklahoma) from the private sector; and Larry Gillette and Harvey Nelson for TTSS. The flyway technical section representatives and other

members of the DC requested that TTSS assume the responsibility for facilitating the effort.

1995

The DC met in Kansas City, Missouri, in September to begin preparation of the plan. I was selected chairperson to coordinate the process over the next 2 years. Administrative support was provided by the TTSS office. During 3 days of discussion, agreement was reached on the scope of the plan, priority management issues, primary goals and objectives, and procedures for carrying out the effort. A working outline was prepared and modified as we proceeded. Responsibilities were assigned to DC members for completing specific sections of the plan. Time frames were established for completion of the first draft and review by the flyway technical sections and other cooperators. Most business was conducted by telephone, fax, and express mail, and through further discussions at flyway technical section meetings. The objective was to have the final plan completed and ready for submission to the two flyway councils for approval by August 1996 or March 1997.

1996

The first draft was reviewed with the Mississippi, Central, and Atlantic Flyway Technical Sections and their respective swan committees during February and at the flyway council meetings at Tulsa, Oklahoma, in March. A second draft was presented to the joint flyway council meetings at Kansas City, Missouri, in July. Larry Gillette or I participated in those meetings. The drafts also were reviewed by TTSS board of directors. A grant of \$5000 was received from the World Wildlife Fund to help cover expenses for preparation of the IPMP, associated meetings, and travel costs.

During each of these steps in the revision and review process, comments were requested and analyzed by the DC. In essence, the first drafts were the product of the DC, whereas subsequent versions became a joint product with the respective technical section swan committees. There was some concern about format and the statement of goals and objectives, but the primary concerns were about specific management issues and proposed strategies. There was a general consensus among the DC members that at this stage it should be more of a conceptual plan than a strategic management plan. When updated in five years, there may be additional supporting information available to provide more specific implementation guidelines and management

recommendations. By then, we should know more about the application of suggested population and distribution objectives, compatibility with other waterfowl hunting programs, winter habitat requirements, and how the swans respond.

The 15 July 1996 draft was considered near final but not ready for submission to the two flyway councils for approval at the July meetings. It was decided that the final plan should be completed by January 1997, circulated to the flyway technical sections prior to their winter meetings, and approval sought at the March 1997 flyway council meetings.

1997

This schedule was maintained. The final review draft went to the DC on 18 December 1996. Additional revisions were made. The final version of the plan was mailed on 17 January to the following:

- Central and Mississippi Flyway Technical Section representatives,
- Atlantic Flyway Technical Section Swan Committee,
- USFWS flyway representatives,
- USFWS regional migratory bird coordinators,
- Canadian Wildlife Service,
- TTSS board of directors, and
- other participating organizations.

We are now ready to enter the implementation stage in accordance with the stated goal, objectives, and management strategies, and to address the management issues identified.

There are many hurdles yet to overcome as we proceed. There are some policy decisions that need to be made. There are management recommendations that require the support of participating federal, state, provincial agencies, and private organizations. Some activities will require new funding and a strong cooperative effort. There are information gaps that need to be filled, some requiring new research. It will be important to observe more closely what the swans themselves do as this population grows and specific flocks extend their winter migration further.

I hope that the discussions, suggestions, and specific recommendations that will be forthcoming from this conference and the meeting of the TTSS board of directors will provide valuable guidance for future actions.

The development of the IPMP has been an interesting and challenging experience. I want to acknowledge the effort devoted to this task by the members of the DC and their willingness to arrive at a consensus on critical issues so that this document could be completed on schedule. I also want to thank the members of the swan committees of the Central and Mississippi Flyway Technical Sections for their suggestions and support in obtaining final approval. We will now need everyone's collective support during the implementation process.

1997-98

Following the conference, the IPMP was approved by the Central Flyway Technical Section in February 1997 and by the Central Flyway Council in March

1997. The Mississippi Flyway Technical Section suggested some minor revisions that were subsequently made, and the IPMP was approved by the Mississippi Flyway Council in March 1998. The revised copy was approved by the Central Flyway Council in May 1998. The final IPMP is being printed and should be available for general distribution by August 1998.

LITERATURE CITED

Banko W. E. 1960. The Trumpeter Swan. No. Amer. Fauna 63. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Washington, DC. 214 pp.