



TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society

12615 County Road 9, Suite 100
Plymouth, MN 55441-1248

www.trumpeterswansociety.org • ttss@trumpeterswansociety.org



Since 1968: Assuring the Vitality and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans

Vol. XX No. 2

July 2010



From the Executive Director

Although financially challenging, 2010 is turning into a very interesting and exciting year. Loll Designs recently became our very first donor through the "1% for the Planet" program. Loll Designs is an award winning outdoor furniture manufacturer, based in Duluth, Minnesota. They specialize in the use of recycled materials. Please check them out at www.lolldesigns.com and let them know that we greatly appreciate their support of swan conservation. 1% for the Planet is a growing network of over 1,200 companies that donate 1% of their gross sales to a selection of environmental organizations,

which includes The Trumpeter Swan Society. They exist to build and support an alliance of businesses financially committed to creating a healthy planet. We extend our thanks to Loll and to 1% for the Planet for their outstanding support.

TTSS also thanks Dick Perkins of Perkins Capital Management, Inc. in Wayzata, Minnesota. A long-time member of TTSS, Dick dedicated a couple of pages in his April newsletter to Trumpeter Swans and TTSS. He has one of our large prints of Trumpeters by James Meger prominently displayed in his office and a very impressive, life-sized carving of a flying Trumpeter hanging from the ceiling. Thanks, Dick, for your support and going above and beyond the call by helping us with outreach and education.

We thank the Stillaguamish Tribal Charity Grant program for its generous grant to help TTSS battle one of the major threats to Trumpeter Swans: mortality from ingestion of lead.

Of news on the administrative front, the TTSS Board adopted a revised Strategic Plan this year to guide our operations for the next 5 years. It's an impressive effort. Read or download a copy from our web site.

Please note that the International Swan Symposium (ISS) that was to be convened in Valdivia, Chile, this fall has been postponed until November of 2011. We will keep you informed of the plans. The ISS is held under the umbrella of the International Swan Working Group that includes swan specialists from throughout the world. For many years, Carl Mitchell, a biologist in the National Wildlife Refuge System, has been the North American Coordinator of the group. I currently serve as the North American Trumpeter Swan species representative working with Carl. Carl would like to step down and move on to other things and so has initiated a search for a new coordinator. If you are interested or know a good potential candidate, please let me know.

We are planning the next Trumpeter Swan Society Conference for early fall of 2011 in Montana. The TTSS Board has decided to follow that conference up with one in the Atlantic Flyway in 2012 or 2013. More and more Trumpeters are appearing in that eastern-most flyway and it is high time we meet there. Stay tuned for more information. An excellent way to do that is to sign up for our free ENEWS or follow us on Facebook for timely news.

Finally, as cygnets are showing up throughout the Trumpeter nesting range, it seems like an excellent time to send this issue of *Trumpetings* with updates on people and projects around the continent.

- John Cornely

THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY – NEWS & UPDATES

PHOTO CREDITS:

Photo Credits:

Pg. 1, Trumpeter Swan Portrait –

John VanOrman (www.vanormanphoto.com).

Pg. 2, Trumpeter Takeoff – Gail Miller.

Pg. 3, Wintering Swans – Mark Cromwell, Map – Mary Bote, Swans on Ice – John VanOrman.

Pg. 4, Trumpeter Alarmed – John VanOrman.

Warning, Trumpeter Gape and Two Swans Landing – Gail Miller.

Pg. 5, Swans on Ice II – John VanOrman, Winter Group – Gail Miller.

Pg. 6, Both Photos – John VanOrman, Art – Narca Moore Craig.

Pg. 7, Volunteer w/ Swan – Ruth Shea, Yukon Celebration – Bruce Bennett, Nesting Swan – James King.

Cover: Trumpeters Courting – Jerry Hogeboom.

Backcover: Ron Andrews – Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources



Trumpetings will be 20 years old in 2011!

In 1991, then TTSS President Jim King from Alaska and the TTSS Board had become concerned that the TTSS membership was not getting enough feedback from the Society. The TTSS members and Board were spread far and wide around North America and it was difficult to keep abreast of the many current happenings in the world of Trumpeters in a timely manner. Several successful restoration programs were well underway and others were being planned. Swan research was being done in Alaska, swan festivals were being initiated, and other swan issues were becoming more prominent, such as swan relocations in the Tristate Region. Hence, *Trumpetings* was initiated as a new bimonthly communication. *Trumpetings* was to be geared to short items as the quarterly Society Newsletter was to continue to provide a forum for more formal and lengthy articles. Director Art Hughlett suggested a short publication, almost quick enough to read on the way back from the mailbox!

The first issue, Volume 1 No. 1, was printed and distributed to members in July 1991. The first editors were TTSS President Jim King and his wife, Mary Lou King, of Juneau, Alaska. *Trumpetings* began as two pages back to back. Two issues were published in 1991 (Volume 1) and grew to five issues in 1992 (Volume 2). Jim and Mary Lou remained editors through 1993.

Larry Gillette became editor in 1993 and four issues were printed. Since then, a number of TTSS Directors, members, and staff have helped with editing: Donna Compton, Jane Noll West, Madeleine Linck, Ruth Shea, John Cornely, Peg Abbott, and David Weaver. There have been a total of 65 issues published through April 2010. Since 1998, the publication schedule has remained steady at three issues per year.

Since the beginning of *Trumpetings*, use of the Internet and computers has exploded and TTSS has embraced the new social media of E-news, blogs, and Facebook. Fancier graphics and digital photos have made *Trumpetings* a more formal publication. While the Internet has taken communication to great heights, our short newsletter's intent is still the same: to keep our members and other swan enthusiasts up to date with significant news about the majestic Trumpeter Swan.

- Madeleine Linck

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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND TRUMPETER A Note from Martha Jordan

The Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island recently lost their male Trumpeter Swan to a predator. They decided to no longer have swans at their arboretum and donated the female swan to our Washington Working Group. Over the years, the Bloedel Reserve Trumpeters produced many cygnets that were donated to us and sent to Iowa for their swan restoration program. Many of these birds are still alive and producing young of their own. This has been a true partnership with enduring success. Thank you to Bloedel Reserve for helping save Trumpeter Swans.

SPECIAL APPRECIATION:

Volunteers: Many thanks to Virginia Anderson for her many hours assembling Trumpeter Watch data from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Heartfelt thanks to authors and contributors to this issue of *Trumpetings*. And special thanks and recognition to the Norcross Foundation of Wales, Massachusetts, for funding this issue of *Trumpetings*, an important communication tool for our membership.

INTERIOR POPULATION

News and Updates from the Region

Mary Bote Reports on Oklahoma

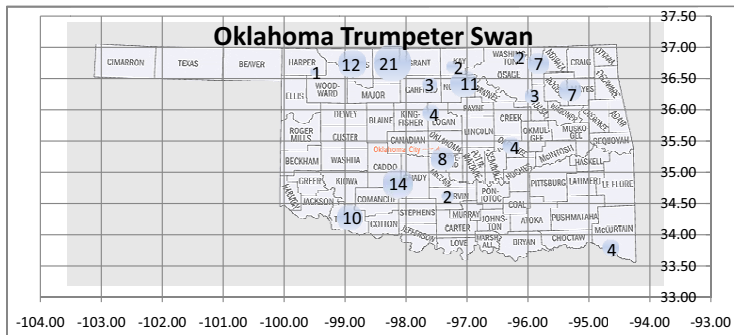


This winter (2009-2010), Oklahoma birders welcomed Trumpeter Swans with many

contributions of their sightings and comments to their local Listserv, OKBIRDS. Eric Beck wrote, *"Lots of swans in Oklahoma this year ... pretty cool!"* Lindell Dillon added, *"Looks like they are learning that Oklahoma is a good place to spend the winter."*

The first 12 Trumpeter Swans arrived December 29-31, 2009, in three separate counties (Garvin, Okfuskee, Washington). The highest weekly count was 51 Trumpeters for the week of January 24 - 30, 2010. Over the whole winter, Trumpeter Swans were observed in 17 counties. Combining the high counts from each county yields a potential of up to 115 Trumpeter Swans. However, some of these swans may have been counted in more than one county over the long count period. The highest count at one location was at Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge (Alfalfa County) with up to 21 Trumpeters (14 adults and 7 juveniles) from January 23 to 31, 2010, during a short cold spell that brought them to open water at Great Salt Plains Lake.

I found it interesting to map the sightings as sized bubbles on a latitude/longitude Microsoft Excel chart with an Oklahoma county map (U.S. Census Bureau). Among the details reported on OKBIRDS was that 12



Tundra Swans were seen with 29 Trumpeters at six locations. Observers reported 67 adult and 29 juvenile Trumpeter Swans, which left 19 of unknown age. Two female Trumpeters in Comanche County had red collars, with codes P70 and 2C7. These were accompanied by two unmarked adults and one unmarked juvenile. These collared females had been at the same location for the past two winters with three other banded Trumpeter Swans. In Nobel County, another marked female Trumpeter wore red leg band OT0. All three marked birds were from the Iowa restoration program.

Those seeing Trumpeter Swans return to a few wintering spots for many years may feel like Mike Brewer, who wrote, *"It is a wonderful event to see the swans back at their favorite location!"* and, *"They are simply beautiful birds to observe."*

Mary Bote, daughter of Harold H. Burgess, resides in Texas and serves as an advisor to our Trumpeter Watch program.



Pat Manthey Reports from the Air: Wisconsin

I'm in a single-engine Cessna over Northwest Wisconsin for a mid-May aerial nesting survey. Crex Meadows. Middle North Fork. *"Ah, there they are, off the right wing, both birds. But they're both on the water, no one on the nest. That's not good. But hey, are there cygnets with them? Let's take another look."* The pilot makes a tight circle. The answer: *"YES, two cygnets up close by their parents!"* Middle North Fork is often the first hatch site at Crex Meadows Wildlife Area in Burnett County, but this year this pair is early in hatching young by over a week. At many sites across the state, we are finding this pattern. Variability appears to be the new norm.

Again, I'm back in the plane, flying another part of the survey, on the way back to the airport. *"SWANS! On a nest! Where are we? Aha, Sailor Lake. We've seen swans here before, but not nesting. It's a new location!"* That's what we like to see: most of the old sites occupied, and new sites showing up!



Despite the early hatches at some sites, we've also seen some traditional nesting areas unoccupied or with nonnesting territorial pairs in May. Northwestern Wisconsin is in a prolonged drought, resulting in the absence of some of our old swan ponds.

Despite increased variability, 2010 looks to be at least as good as 2009 for nesting pairs, and we are likely approaching 200 pairs in Wisconsin. We'll have a better idea after all the June aerial surveys are done. The swans are slowly pioneering new areas, setting more first-nesting records in counties farther away from the core populations.

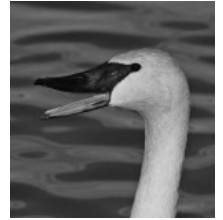
From the field: We're beginning the 3rd year of our post-delisting monitoring efforts, with aerial surveys followed up by on-ground site visits to read collars. We plan to capture and mark about 100 swans this season so we can continue to track them as they grow up and establish pair bonds and nests. Each bird we capture gets a quick overall health assessment, is weighed, and given the "bling" – a USFWS leg band, yellow collar and matching yellow leg band. About half of the captured birds will have more extensive health samples taken. A blood sample will be tested for lead for our ongoing study and we will continue our participation in the USDA Avian Influenza Monitoring Program by submitting oral and cloacal swabs from these Trumpeters.

People love Trumpeters. Volunteers are an important part of the program. We get emails with observation data, photos, videos, and sound recordings. Many dedicated observers are eager for the banding season to begin so they can get out on the water with us.

*Patricia Manthey
is Avian Ecologist,
Bureau of
Endangered
Resources
Wisconsin
Department of
Natural
Resources.*



David Rogles Reports from Riverlands



Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (RMBS) is about 2 miles upstream of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. The sanctuary, just 40 minutes north of St. Louis, is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property located at Lock and Dam #26. Most of the wetland habitat of RMBS is in Missouri (West Alton) though birds use adjacent habitat on the other side of the Mississippi River in Illinois (Alton). There is a warm-water outlet upstream at a power plant that enables the birds to overwinter in extreme weather. Most years at least a small pool stays open in Ellis Bay for the birds.

Trumpeter Swans arrive at the end of October in small family groups of three to six. Upon arrival, Trumpeters fly low over the marshes, calling back and forth, before



settling. Through mid-December, groups continue to arrive, some to stay the winter, others to rest before moving farther and farther south.

In 1999, the RMBS winter population was about 30 birds. A decade later, in the winter of 2008-2009, the mid-December high count, when winter residents and migrants are present, was 560. This past winter (2009-2010), the RMBS wintering flock was estimated at 440.

Staff and volunteers of RMBS record the band numbers, tally daily counts, and record mortality, which occurs mainly from power line collisions, high lead levels, and illegal shooting. Between 2002 and 2008, an impressive total of 72 collared birds was noted. Most of the birds are from the Wisconsin population with collared birds from Iowa and Ohio recorded as well. Hatch-year birds comprise 20 percent of the total.

RMBS is internationally recognized as part of the Great Rivers Confluence Important Bird Area. There are local bird walks on most weekends, and organized Bald Eagle watches are conducted during the peak numbers in January and February. The large size of the Trumpeters, and their relative tameness, make them a subject of

many photographers. An astute observer will find 10 to 20 Tundra Swans among the birds, and the occasional Mute Swan.

During the winter the sonorous bass of the Trumpeters provides a counterpoint to the raucous calls of gulls. Each day, and every movement, begins with head bobbing and calling. When the area is frozen, the birds will sleep until well after sunrise, but, as the days warm, they are up and about at daybreak. By mid-February, the swans begin to move north and the marshes again go silent.

David Rogles is President, St. Louis Audubon Society and State Compiler, North American Migration Count.

Karen Rowe Reports from Arkansas



In *Arkansas Birds, Their Distribution and Abundance* published in 1984, authors James and Neal state that Trumpeter Swans are “extirpated from the state with no reports in at least seventy years.” Eleven years after those words were published, Trumpeter Swans in Arkansas were reported to the Arkansas Audubon Society’s Bird Records Database in the winter of 1995. This report included nine Trumpeter Swans observed at Magness Lake in Cleburne County. In January 2002, a count of 45 swans was observed at Magness Lake. That number pales in comparison to the high count of 126 swans at Magness in 2007. In 2010, the Game and Fish Commission received reports that there were more than 180 Trumpeters on Magness Lake at one time.

During the winter of 2007-2008, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) initiated a Trumpeter release project in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and TTSS. Swans from Iowa have now been released during three winters, mostly on Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge.

The wintering Trumpeter Swan flock at Magness Lake is approaching the carrying capacity of the corn feeders, native vegetation on the 15-acre lake, and 15

acres of surrounding pasture land. In 2008, it was not surprising to find several family groups of Trumpeter Swans using a private lake on Hiram Road, 5 to 8 miles east of Magness Lake. In 2010, 60 swans were observed there. It is likely that the Hiram Road site is a “satellite” area for the Magness Lake swans, with birds moving between the two wintering sites. Trumpeter Swans are also observed on the sandbars of the Little Red River adjacent to Magness Lake.

A review of both Arkansas Audubon Society and AGFC records from 1995-2008 shows that Trumpeter Swans were observed in Arkansas (with the exception of Magness Lake) primarily as lone birds or pairs from 1996 until 2005. During this period, only 14 reports of Trumpeter Swans were received. When the Mississippi Flyway Council’s Trumpeter Swan Reverse Migration Experiment was initiated in 2008, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission actively solicited reports of both marked and unmarked swans from the public. From 2008 until March of 2010, the Commission received 86 reliable reports of Trumpeter Swans (only swans that were not part of the Arkansas release were included in this total). These reports generally involved 2-3 swans with several sightings noting up to 14 individuals.

Arkansas is divided into five physiographic regions: the Ozark Mountains (northcentral/northwest), the Ouachita Mountains (west), the West Gulf Coastal Plain Piney Woods (southern/southwest), and the Arkansas River Valley and the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (east). Arkansas’ two major Trumpeter Swan wintering sites, Magness Lake and Hiram Road, are located in the valley pasturelands of the Ozark Mountains. Of the 86 reports of migrating Trumpeter Swans in Arkansas from 2008 to 2010, 34 swan sightings occurred on privately-owned ponds and small lakes in the Ozark Mountains.



In contrast to the swan’s mountain pond habitat, the Arkansas River Valley is comprised of extensive wetlands, swamps, and marshes along the Arkansas River, many of which lay adjacent to crop fields where rice, soybeans, and winter wheat are grown. From 2008 to 2010, there were 29 reports of wintering swans in the Arkansas River Valley. A number of reports were of swans using state-owned management areas and the Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge. Arkansas’ Mississippi Alluvial Valley region is well known for its abundance of waterfowl that winter in the wetlands, flooded timber, winter wheat, and harvested rice and soybean fields. During this same period, there were 23 reports of

wintering swans in Arkansas' Mississippi Alluvial Valley. There were no reports of Trumpeter Swans in the state's West Gulf Coastal Plain or Ouachita Mountain physiographic regions.

The AGFC will continue to request reports from the public on the locations and numbers of collared and unmarked Trumpeter swans. The Commission's swan data is shared with other states and with The Trumpeter Swans Society.

Karen Rowe is the Bird Conservation Program Coordinator for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, working out of the Hampton Waterfowl Research Center in Humphrey.

Madeleine Linck Reports on Minnesota's Suburban Trumpeter Swans

Minnesota is known for its 10,000+ lakes and many more small marshes and bogs with high numbers of nesting Common Loons (greatest number in the Lower 48 States) and Bald Eagles (right behind Alaska and Florida). In more remote parts of Minnesota, most of the wetlands are difficult to access to count waterfowl except by airplane. Later this year, Minnesota will participate in the 2010 Trumpeter Swan population survey.



Last year, it was estimated that about 3,000 Trumpeters live in the state. While Trumpeters occur most often in remote marshes (they prefer quiet marshes over larger lakes with boat traffic), they have also proven to be quite adaptable to humans. Arnie Fredrickson, long-time TTSS member, is a swan volunteer for Three Rivers Park District and has found, along with reports from landowners, a number of nesting territories located right in the middle of suburbia. Plymouth and Maple Grove, Hennepin County, have populations between 60,000 and 70,000 people and host successful nesting pairs of Trumpeter Swans. One of the Maple Grove pairs is raising seven cygnets this year! Two pairs



are adjacent to subdivisions and one pair is in a marsh right behind a busy shopping mall. Another pair with six cygnets claimed a territory on a former golf course pond in Anoka County that now has a new housing development surrounding the pond. Another pair with cygnets occupies a small marsh behind a housing development in Medina, Hennepin County. Frequent reports from local residents show how excited the human neighbors are to have swans on territory in their neighborhood. The swans keep their distance, but offer great views of family life for the residents. While we think of Trumpeter Swans as symbols of wilderness, the swans are showing us that some are very adaptable. At least six pairs of swans in the western Minneapolis metro area have broods of six to eight cygnets.

Madeleine Linck works with Three Rivers Park District, and is a long-time staff member of The Trumpeter Swan Society

Chuck Hocevar Reports from Ohio

I have completed the editing for the Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) in Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia for the previous CBC season. There were no reports of Trumpeter Swans in Kentucky and West Virginia. However, Ohio compilers reported observations from seven areas. They are listed as follows:



- 1- Ashland 1
- 2- Chandlersville 14
- 3- Delaware Reservoir 2
- 4- Fremont 48
- 5- Killdeer Plains W.A. 9
- 6- Ottawa NWR 47
- 7- Toledo 3

Total for Ohio 124

Chuck Hocevar is Regional Editor, National Audubon Society CBC

ROCKY MOUNTAIN & PACIFIC COAST POPULATIONS

OREGON RELEASES

On June 17, with fresh snow dusting Wyoming's Teton Mountains and temperatures barely above freezing, my husband, Rod Drewien, and I headed west across southern Idaho. Riding quietly in our horse trailer, our precious cargo of 12 yearling Trumpeters was about to begin life in the wild and bring new hope to Oregon's Trumpeter Swan restoration efforts. Reared at the Wyoming Wetland Society's (WWS) outdoor pond facilities in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, these young swans will hopefully



bond with other swans in Oregon's small restoration flock and help establish successful nesting in Oregon or elsewhere in the Pacific Flyway.

Cool temperatures were ideal to minimize stress to the swans during their early morning capture, processing, and the 750-mile journey to Oregon's Summer Lake. Free to move around in the horse trailer, with clean straw for bedding and ample food and fresh water, the young swans remained calm throughout the journey. All appeared to be in excellent condition when released at Summer Lake.

During the capture, or "Swan Round-Up," WWS staff and volunteers used kayaks to successfully herd over 50 swans into a walk-in trap. They processed them carefully and then efficiently sorted and loaded them for transport to release sites in western Montana and Idaho, as well as Oregon. Partners in the Oregon Restoration Effort include Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, WWS, and TTSS. We also thank Harold Burgess, the Mountaineers Foundation, and the Felburn Foundation for helping to fund the purchase and transport of the Oregon swans.

YUKON'S CELEBRATION OF SWANS

Jim Hawkings, TTSS Board Member, reports:



The 2010 Yukon Celebration of Swans was one to remember. After 3 years of somewhat late springs, resulting in delayed buildups of Trumpeter Swans

at well-known migration hotspots such as Swan Haven and Tagish Narrows, the spring of 2010 turned out to be a real blockbuster. Swans came early and in huge numbers. All-time records for Trumpeter Swans were broken at Swan Haven every day from April 2 to 14. For much of that time, numbers almost doubled the previous records. The most impressive day was April 7, when there were 3,306 Trumpeters at the two areas combined (2,432 at Swan Haven, 874 at Tagish Narrows). This Swan Haven count annihilated the old record of 1,101 for that day, set in 2004. Several things likely contributed to this "perfect storm" of swans: a relatively warm and extremely dry winter in most of British Columbia and Southern Yukon, and continued growth in the Pacific Coast Population.

Carrie McClelland, Environment Yukon:

During an unseasonably warm spring over 2500 people, nearly 10 percent of all Yukoners, visited Swan Haven Interpretation Centre, 40km south of the Whitehorse International Airport. They witnessed record-high numbers of swans and shorebirds stopping to rest and feed on their way north. More than 600 Yukon students and teachers participated in interpretive programs, learning about wetlands, migration, and waterbirds. Warm, sunny days quickly melted the ice in shallow M'Clintock Bay on Marsh Lake bringing swans, ducks, and geese very close to the viewing platform. This year, Trumpeters were truly the harbingers of spring for Yukon.



CHANGING TIMES IN ALASKA

A note from Jim King, TTSS Board of Directors:

May 19 to 20, 2010, we drove from Haines to Anchorage, about 800 miles, and saw 38 wild Trumpeter Swans with 9 pairs on nests. Twenty years

ago, I would drive this route and never see a swan let alone a nest. These were just views from the car and not the result of exhaustive search. We don't know what kind of census will be pulled off in 2010, but I would say the possibilities look exciting.

THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY – SALUTE TO RON ANDREWS

Assuring the Vitality and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans



TTSS congratulates Board stalwart Ron Andrews on his well-deserved retirement from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Ron has had a long, diverse career that included leading the very successful reintroduction of Trumpeter Swans to Iowa. We are very pleased that Ron has pledged to continue his work on the Board with The Trumpeter Swan Society! Many of you may not know of Ron's work with furbearers in Iowa, working with red foxes, coyotes, skunks, and otters, among other critters. However, if you know Ron, you know of his ability to create catchy phrases. As otter restoration coordinator, he coined, "*They otter be in Iowa.*" Trumpeter enthusiasts familiar with the Iowa restoration will have heard "*Trumpeting the Cause*

for Wetlands" many times. Trumpeters are fortunate to have Ron working for them. In our next issue of *Trumpetings*, we will include a longer article about Ron and his accomplishments. Stay tuned for more in the fall...

- John Cornely



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*Since 1968: Assuring the Vitality
and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans*

Photo by Jerry Hogeboom, MN



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The Trumpeter Swan Society
12615 County Road 9, Suite 100
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