

TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society

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

Vol. XX11 No. 3

NOVEMBER 2012

GREETINGS FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



traditions can co-exist.

Executive Director John Cornely asked me to write the column for this *Trumpetings* issue and the timing seems appropriate, since November represents the first anniversary of my hire. It has been eye-opening for me to see the amount of work accomplished by The Trumpeter Swan Society, often through volunteer labor and always on tight budgets. What has also struck me during my first year as a staff member of TTSS is the reminder that, despite decades of good work on the part of TTSS and its partners, the challenges faced by Trumpeter Swans echo many of the same themes that plagued the restoration programs of my graduate school years: lead poisoning, power line collisions, illegal shootings, and lack of suitable winter habitat and resources. It's not that we haven't made progress; we have. But as people continue to use and modify natural habitats, TTSS must continue to develop creative ideas about how Trumpeter Swans, altered landscapes, and hunting and fishing

It was with that goal in mind that I recently attended a workshop in Great Falls, MT convened by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). I was granted a fellowship through the Audubon Toyota TogetherGreen program to develop guidance materials for use by citizens and conservation groups interested in working with electric energy companies to reduce Trumpeter Swan mortality associated with power lines in their communities. The APLIC meeting was an educational start to the project. APLIC members include over 30 electric utilities in North America and serve as the industry resource for avian electrocution and collision issues. They research avian utility issues, develop recommendations, and encourage the development of voluntary Avian Protection Plans. TTSS is enthusiastic about partnering with utilities to reduce Trumpeter Swan collision mortality. As we gather information about power line siting, public input options, and effectiveness and optimal placement of diverters, I welcome your stories and photos of Trumpeter Swan/power line issues in your communities (email me at babel@trumpeterswansociety.org).

TTSS's concerns about the ongoing introduction of toxic lead into the environment through spent ammunition and fishing sinkers (See July 2012 *Trumpetings*) have been elevated with the introduction to the U.S. Senate of the Sportsman's Act of 2012 (S.3525). While the Sportsman's Act contains some strong conservation measures and therefore has the support of many well-respected conservation organizations, it contains provisions that strip EPA's ability to regulate lead as a toxic substance in ammunition, under the guise of preserving traditional hunting ammunition. The bill will not be voted on until after the recess, but we remain concerned that a bill that is widely perceived as strong for conservation contains such a damaging provision.

This is the last *Trumpetings* for 2012, so in closing, I'd like to ask you to consider supporting TTSS as you make your year-end giving decisions. We welcome all donations, from small checks to shares of stock, and, of course, TTSS memberships make meaningful holiday gifts. You will receive your annual appeal request soon. Membership renewal requests will no longer be sent out with the annual appeal, but will be on a new quarterly schedule in 2013. (See Membership Matters on page 2.)

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Changes in your Mailbox: Renewal timing will change to quarterly

An Important Update from Associate Director, Becky Abel



TTSS was founded in 1968 and, for more than four decades, we have succeeded in a large the part through of support our members. Individual. organizational, and corporate members are the lifeblood of any nonprofit conservation organization, and TTSS is no exception. Our

members provide expertise, volunteer labor, and, of course, financial support. They also communicate our messages of Trumpeter Swan conservation in communities across North America.

Over the past few years, TTSS has undertaken the goal of expanding our organizational capacity (despite the hurdle of a challenging economy), in order to better meet the varied conservation needs of Trumpeter Swans across an expanding area. Our efforts in this regard have included adding a part-time Associate Director position, broadening our outreach efforts to reach new audiences, and stretching the value of new member donations through a board member-led membership challenge. We are also upgrading our systems to better manage our member database.

Long-term TTSS members are aware that membership dues renewals have been structured on a calendar basis, with the membership period running from January-December. Under this system, we asked all members to renew membership for the following year during or near December. As we optimistically plan for an organization with more members and greater capacity, we have decided to change our member renewal system.

Starting in 2013, we will send membership renewals quarterly, according to when a specific member's dues/donations were paid in the previous year. This means that you will still receive a special Annual Appeal letter in late 2012, but your Membership Renewal letter will arrive in your mailbox during the quarter in which you last renewed. This will better distribute our staff workload and membership revenue throughout the year, while allowing our members to renew their yearly memberships according to their own schedules. We also believe that separating the Annual Appeal and Renewal will be less confusing.

Thank you to all of our member supporters. Without your support there would not be a conservation organization focused entirely on Trumpeter Swan conservation.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Yukon's Celebration of Swans April 13-21, 2013 Contact: Environment Yukon, Government of Yukon 867-667-8291 wildlife.viewing@gov.yk.ca

TTSS BOARD & STAFF

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TRUMPETINGS Editors:

Peg Abbott, John Cornely, & Becky Abel

TRAVEL WITH TTSS??

TTSS is considering hosting a travel program.

We'd like your input! A portion of the tour cost would benefit TTSS.



Join fellow TTSS members and friends to explore sites with exceptional swan viewing opportunities. Learn from the experts while enjoying travel with swan and other wildlife enthusiasts and professional colleagues.

2013 Destinations could include: Western US: Rocky Mountains, Oregon, Pacific Coast; Maryland's Eastern Shore (timed with the TTSS 23rd Annual Conference); Chile: Patagonia's Lake District, Tierra del Fuego & Torres del Paine; Canada: Yukon's Celebration of Swans and more... Let us know what swans of the world you most want to see and where you'd most like to travel with us by contacting:

babel@trumpeterswansociety.org

BEST CYGNET PRODUCTION IN GREATER YELLOWSTONE IN 25 YEARS!



By Ruth Shea

Greater Yellowstone's Trumpeter Swan managers held their annual working group meeting at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), October 9-11. We were very happy to learn that 372 adults and 169 cygnets were found on the mid-September survey in the Greater Yellowstone region. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is still finalizing the numbers, but this is certain to be the best cygnet production year in the region since 1987.

In 1992, supplemental winter feeding of swans was terminated at Red Rock Lakes NWR. During the 1990s, federal and state agencies undertook a very difficult effort to expand the swans' winter distribution. The process of encouraging new habitat use patterns and exploiting new sources of winter nutrition has been long and difficult. In recent years, unusually mild winters have made it possible for wintering swans to feed in fields in eastern Idaho. An unknown portion of the U.S. resident breeding swans, and many hundreds of wintering Canadian Trumpeter Swans, have learned to feed heavily on grains and small potatoes that remain in the fields after harvest. This has caused an important ecological shift in their winter feeding pattern. These new winter food sources were not anticipated 20 years ago when supplemental feeding ended. In those years, these fields were usually snowcovered and frozen in winter.

Last winter was unusually mild and large flocks of swans were observed feeding in the fields. In addition, spring and summer weather conditions were excellent for nesting in much of the region. Spring temperatures were mild, flooding was minimal, and summer weather for brood rearing was unusually warm and dry. Water conditions were excellent at Red Rock Lakes NWR and portions of adjacent Idaho and Wyoming.

Almost half of the excellent Greater Yellowstone region cygnet production came from Red Rock Lakes NWR and nearby sites in the Centennial Valley, where about 80 cygnets were found in September. Nesting was also excellent in nearby territories in Idaho, and six territories fledged 23 of Idaho's 30 cygnets. This year's large cygnet production, combined with the shift to new winter foods, provides hope that the Greater Yellowstone swans will increase.

In the past, winter severity has been a major contributor to swan mortality in Greater Yellowstone. Only time will tell if the swans' new winter feeding patterns will help them survive a severe winter and enable this year's high cygnet production to contribute significantly to population growth.

RED ROCK LAKES NWR IN GREATER YELLOWSTONE & MONTEZUMA NWR IN NEW YORK RECEIVE FEDERAL FUNDING

This year, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission authorized the investment of nearly \$11 million to add to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge system. The funding source is Migratory Bird Conservation funds, which are partially funded from the sale of federal duck stamps. Two of the selected areas are important to nesting Trumpeter Swans. One approved tract is at the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Montana. The addition is 12,352 acres of a wetland complex in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, important to breeding Trumpeter Swans in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The other is Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in New York. Montezuma NWR received funds to restore an important tract that could increase the refuge's capacity to support an additional 9,000 migratory waterfowl in the spring and more than 18,000 in the fall.

PHOTO CREDITS:

Pg. 1: Becky Abel, Leonardo Carrizo; Pg. 2: "Trinity" Danny Brown, www.dannybrownphotography.com, Torres del Paine, Chile, Howard Topoff; Pg. 3: Nesting Swan, Alan Sachanowski, Swans at RRL NWR, Jess Lee; Pg. 4: Swans field feeding, Martha Jordan, Swan

Group, C.J. Metcalfe, others by Mark Wetzel; Pg. 5: Swans feeding and lone juvenile, Mark Wetzel, Swans in flight, Michael Waite; Pg. 6: both by Mark Wetzel, drawing by Narca Moore-Craig; Pg. 7: Joe



Johnson at TTSS 22nd Conference, P. Abbott

SHORT TRUMPETS



SOLO'S LEGACY CONTINUES

In northeastern Washington, Solo's "widow" carries on. Many were delighted when an aging but well-known swan named Solo (who spent more than two decades alone) found a new mate and, in the summers of 2009 and 2010, produced broods at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Washington. Solo was between 35-48 years of age when he disappeared from Turnbull in January 2011, bringing an end to his storied time at the refuge. This summer, Solo's former mate paired with an unmarked adult, and five cygnets hatched on June 20th. TTSS called to check in on them and found that, despite low-water conditions this summer, three cygnets survived. With recent news that the cygnets are taking flight, Solo's legacy continues!

UPDATE FROM OREGON

By TTSS Board President Gary Ivey



In Oregon, we have released 49 trumpeter swans at Summer Lake Wildlife Management Area since we began the Oregon Trumpeter Swan enhancement project in 2009.

Releases this summer include three yearlings and five cygnets purchased from the Wyoming Wetland Society, three yearlings donated by Northwest Trek from Washington State (thanks to Martha Jordan), three cygnets donated by the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, and one subadult from the Bend, Oregon flock. The highlight this year was a nest found in Crook County, at Rabbit Valley Reservoir which produced two cygnets.

However, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge numbers hit an all-time low, with only seven adults recorded there in September, and no young produced.





A NEW THREAT TO TRUMPETER SWANS

Your Washington Swan Stewards (WSS) are opposing the building of a cable wakeboard park, one of about 140 in the world, on Lake Tye in the City of Monroe, Washington. In this extreme- action sport, one is pulled on a wakeboard by cable rather than by boat. The cable is suspended between a series of towers. TTSS's WSS, led by Martha Jordan, is calling for mitigation to avoid avian collisions on the towers and cables as well as other protective measures. Located at the edge of a major waterfowl migration route and Trumpeter Swan winter use area, Lake Tye, which was originally built as a stormwater retention pond for a housing area, became a hot spot for birds. Project mitigation could draw attention to the need for viable staging areas for fall migration of swans, geese, and other water birds

CLASSIC PUBLICATION AVAILABLE ONLINE



Winston Banko's classic *The Trumpeter Swan* was published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1960 as the 63rd installment of the

North American Fauna series. "Win" is a past manager of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. His book was a compendium of just about everything known about Trumpeters at the time. The USFWS has now put the North American Fauna series online. Anyone who wishes to read Winston Banko's classic, and still extremely accurate and valuable monograph on Trumpeter Swans, can access it and download it at: http://www.fwspubs.org/toc/nafa//63

WATERFOWL SYMPOSIUM

TTSS staff will attend a symposium on the Ecology and Conservation of North American Waterfowl in Memphis, Tennessee, in January, 2013. There will be numerous presentations concerning ducks, geese and swans, including papers on Trumpeter Swans. Waterfowl researchers, biologists, and managers will gather at the Peabody Hotel to discuss the latest information on waterfowl ecology and conservation.

GET THE LEAD OUT UPDATE



By John Cornely

Those of you who have been reading *Trumpetings* for the last few years or even just the last issue know that lead poisoning is one of the leading causes of mortality for Trumpeter Swans. We have been working to reduce the problem the most in Washington State and adjacent British Columbia, but it can be a serious problem anywhere in Trumpeter range.

Since the summer issue of *Trumpetings*, TTSS has been awarded two new grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to do assessments of lead poisoning of swans, swan surveys, and to fund lead poisoning mitigation projects, all in Washington State. This work is done in partnership with federal, state and private partners and includes significant contributions from volunteers.

Several thousand Trumpeters and many Tundra swans have perished in the last decade after ingesting spent lead shot from shotgun shells. Some of the shot is decades old, but some may have been deposited more recently. Although lead shot has been banned from waterfowl hunting for years, hunters can still legally use lead for upland bird hunting, dove hunting, and for skeet and trap shooting. It only takes a few small pellets to kill a swan and other birds. Lead bullets in unretrieved big game are killing California Condors, eagles, and other raptorial birds that scavenge the carcasses. Trumpeters can also die by ingesting lead sinkers lost by anglers when they break their lines. Numerous loons die from lead sinkers as well.

There are nontoxic alternatives available for shotguns, rifles, and fishing tackle. That is why TTSS and many other conservation groups are asking to "get the lead out" of hunting and fishing. Some groups are calling these efforts "anti-hunting" or an "effort to ban firearms." That is not true for TTSS and there are enlightened hunters and hunting groups supporting us.

Some of this misinformation has led to adding a provision to the Sportmen's Act of 2012 (Senate Bill 3525) to ban the Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA) from regulating lead as a toxic substance in ammunition. The sponsor of this bill has, in our opinion, mostly good intentions, but this EPA provision is counterproductive and just plain bad. The National Parks and Conservation Association is opposed to another part of the bill that could open many national parks to hunting. A vast amount of public land is open for hunting on our national wildlife refuges, national forests, Bureau of Land Management lands, many tracks of state lands and even some military land and national parks. Hunting is not an appropriate activity in most of



the parks
where it is
currently
prohibited.
This bill will
come up for a
vote just after
the election.
We ask you to
consider

asking your senators to remove these bad sections and then support the amended bill. Most conservationminded senators are supporting the bill. Maybe they are not aware of the very negative provisions hidden away in over 100 pages of bureaucratic language?

FUNDING ISSUES:

CONGRESSIONAL BICKERING AND SEQUESTRATION

A grave threat to our wildlife, wildlife refuges, parks, and other public lands comes from Congress' inability to address the federal deficit. This January, as a result of the 2011 Budget Control Act, all domestic discretionary programs will suffer an automatic across-the-board cut or "sequester" of 8 to 10 percent unless Congress can find some other way to reduce spending. Ultimately, the biggest impact of the impending budget sequester could be the complete closure of some national wildlife refuges, national parks, and national forests. means fewer visitors, anglers, hunters, birdwatchers and would result in the loss of many jobs and millions of dollars to local economies. In some rural areas, these jobs and this income is the most significant source of community income. Conservation is a bipartisan issue supported by an overwhelming majority of North Americans. Let the U.S. Congress and

Canadian
Parliament
know that you
support swans,
other wildlife
species, and
wild places.



DUCK STAMPS, WETLANDS & CONSERVATION

By John Cornely, Executive Director



Executive Director John Cornely was in Ogden, Utah this September, where the annual judging occurred to select artwork for the 2013 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. These stamps have been printed every year beginning in 1934, with the proceeds from the sales used to purchase wetlands and wildlife habitat for

national wildlife refuges. About 98 cents out of every dollar goes to the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund for that purpose. More than one half billion dollars have been raised for conservation this way.

The Trumpeter Swan has only appeared on the stamp once. That stamp, however, marked the very first time that an open competition was held to select the artwork. There were 22 judges for that first contest, which was won by Walter Weber's rendering of two Trumpeters flying over Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (RRL NWR) in Montana. As you may recall, RRL NWR was specifically established to help save the rare Trumpeters from extinction.

Over time the contest rules have changed somewhat and now there are five judges each year. John was honored to be the alternate judge this year and will be a primary next year. Each year, depictions of five species of waterfowl are eligible for submission. In 2015, the Trumpeter Swan will once again be one of the five.

Duck stamps are one of the most prized of all stamps by collectors and they must be possessed and carried by all hunters over 16 years of age when they hunt waterfowl. Limited addition signed and numbered prints of the artwork are sold each year as well. If you care about wetland and waterfowl habitat conservation, you should buy a **Duck Stamp every year!** They make a tremendous



difference for Trumpeters and many of their feathery and furry friends. The 1950-51 duck stamp was adapted from the artwork top left.

GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS AND FOR TRUMPETERS

Christmas is coming soon, so why not give those Trumpeter fans in your family or among your friends something from our swan gift shop. You can view what we have available online. Go to www.trumpeterswansociety.org and click on the Swan Gift Shop button at the top of the home page. We have T-shirts with long or short sleeves, polo shirts, sweat shirts and caps. Fine art photos and prints of Trumpeter Swans are available at reasonable prices as are figurines, a puzzle box, and an outstanding video. You may print the list and send it in your order paid with a check, or order online with a credit card. A portion of every sale goes to Trumpeter conservation.

While you are thinking of gifts, why not give a Gift Membership to The Trumpeter Swan Society and introduce our important work to your friends and Memberships are not expensive and well over 90% of every membership dollar goes directly to swan conservation work.

TTSS TO HOST NEXT **INTERNATIONAL SWAN SYMPOSIUM**



Mark your calendars! Planning is underway for a combined TTSS Conference and International Swan Symposium in early February, 2014. Swan specialists from all over the world will be invited to join on the Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay, to share the latest knowledge of the World's eight species of swans.

TTSS WELCOMES **NEW MEMBERS**

Since our last issue, people from 14 states and 1 province have joined our flock!

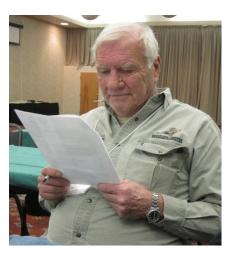
CANADA: Manitoba: Michael Anderson – Winnepeg

USA: Arkansas: Mike Martin, Cave Springs; California: W.G Wells -Santa Monica; Colorado: Daniel Schlager – Denver; **Georgia:** Joey Marcus - Atlanta; Idaho: David Derry – Swan Valley; Illinois: Tony Judge - Chicago; Louisiana: Jeff Wendorff; Maryland: Jane Bussard Hagerstown, Lucille Coleman Baltimore; Michigan: Debra Masselink – Shelbyville;

Missouri: John Schulz – Columbia; Montana: George Darrow - Big Fork; Oregon: Craig Cameron - Tygh Valley, Chris Copp – Portland; **Utah:** Liz Abel – Salt Lake City; Wisconsin: Terry & Mary Kohler - Sheboygan, Birgit & Tom Bach - Madison, Don & Marge Gibson - Antigo, Jim Hoefler – Grantsburg, Richard Hunt – Fall River.

www.trumpeterswansociety.org

TTSS AND TRUMPETERS SAY GOODBYE TO A GREAT FRIEND



On October 9, 2012, Society lost Director and friend Joe Johnson. W. C. "Joe" Johnson wrote and implemented the restoration plan for Trumpeter **Swans** for Michigan and served as the State's Trumpeter restoration Swan coordinator. He led

the very successful effort to restore the magnificent Trumpeter to part of its historical nesting range after over a century.

The native of Kalamazoo was best known for his waterfowl and wetland expertise, but his interests and experience were much broader. Joe was an avid hunter and served on the National Board of Directors of Pheasants Forever for 16 years. He was elected to the Board of Directors of The Trumpeter Swan Society in 2003 and was an active member and TTSS Conference participant for many years prior to that. Since 1987, he has been the Chair of the Mississippi Flyway Council's Swan Committee, continuing to serve even in retirement. At the time of his swan song, he was leading the Flyway Council's effort to revise the management plan for Trumpeters.

Joe worked at Michigan State University's W. K. Kellogg Bird Sanctuary for 48 years. He retired in 2007 after being the sanctuary's Manager since 1985. In addition to his excellent work with swans, he was instrumental in the successful return of Giant Canada Geese to Michigan.

Joe spent his last days at Rose Arbor Hospice Center, which is surrounded by a natural space with ponds frequented by flocks of Canada Geese. As Joe's family left Rose Arbor all of the geese took flight hours earlier than their normal routine to escort Joe to his next Sanctuary. We will sorely miss his friendship and good counsel. We will have to search for someone else to keep us in line according to Robert's Rules of Order. He was truly one of kind!

When he retired, the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary established the Joe Johnson Endowment Fund for Wildlife Conservation Fellowship. This fund provides support for students who want to study and work with wildlife conservation and habitat preservation or restoration at the Sanctuary. The Directors and staff of TTSS are going to make a contribution to the fund to honor Joe for his outstanding contributions to swan conservation and his leadership in TTSS. We invite you to do the same.

To contribute, you may go online to:

http://www.kbs.msu.edu/giving/joe-johnson-fund.

GREAT RIVERS TRUMPETER SWAN WATCH

A Second Year of Monitoring Efforts Begins

A Report by TTSS member Pat Lueders, St. Louis

Volunteers in the greater St. Louis area are preparing to monitor wintering Trumpeter Swans in the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers confluence region for a second season. Observers begin the 2012-2013 Great Rivers Swan Watch shortly after swans are expected to arrive at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (RMBS), with the first count on November 13. New volunteers are welcome to join the effort and will accompany experienced observers from last year's season.

This year, the advisory committee expects flexibility will be needed for manning the watch at various locations, due to the region's drought and its effect on habitat available for the swans. They also plan to expand the study area, because during last year's swan watch, observers saw many of the swans flying from RMBS to unknown locations in Illinois. This year, teams will attempt to discover these locations so they can be surveyed. Dates for the upcoming season are: 2012: 11/13, 11/27, and 12/11; 2013: 1/7-11 (Missouri statewide count), 1/22, 2/5, and 2/19. The nation-wide Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey occurs this year Jan. 7-11.

Missouri observers contributed to last year's Midwinter Survey count at the request of Joe Johnson, as part of the National Survey coordinated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Last year, the highest number of Trumpeter Swans wintering south of the 40th parallel in a century was reported in the Mississippi Flyway. We know that Joe was very pleased.

Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch is a collaborative effort of Audubon Missouri, St. Louis Audubon Society (SLAS), Great Rivers Audubon Society, the Audubon Center at the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (ACR), the Audubon Society of Missouri (ASM), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers River Project Office (USCE), and Two Rivers NWR, partnered with The Trumpeter Swan Society (TTSS),. Last year, eighteen volunteers (see *Trumpetings* Vol. XXII No. 1, March 2012) conducted counts throughout the winter season, with swan numbers exceeding 500 wintering swans at times. The program staff and advisors were Pat Lueders (SLAS), Charlie Deutsch (USCE), Jane Drake (ACR), Lane Richter (ACR), Ben McGuire (ACR), Dr. Patricia Hagen (ACR), and Peg Abbott (TTSS).

November 2012

THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY

Assuring the Vitality and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans



Photo: Marge and Jim Springett Blog: http://mjspringett.wordpress.com/

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Follow our BLOG, an easy top-right click from our website <u>www.trumpeterswansociety.org</u>. We welcome submissions for our Photo-of-the-Month feature, and welcome swan-oriented guest articles for review.

Volunteer with TTSS. We welcome help with our newsletter, with reaching out to potential members to make our Society stronger, and as winter approaches, help with tracking Trumpeters as part of our Trumpeter Watch Citizen Science program.

Shop with us for the Holidays, your gift selections benefit Trumpeter Swans. (See page 6 in this issue for details.)

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