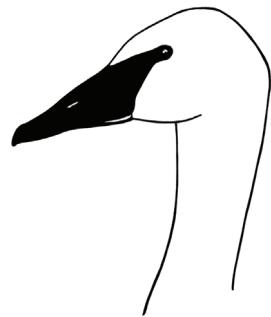




TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society



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

Vol. XX No. 3

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From the Executive Director: As the fall colors in Colorado start to peak, I am reminded that TTSS is entering a time of year that is very important to our existence and ability to achieve important swan conservation goals. We are beginning our fall annual appeal and membership renewal campaign.

ANNUAL APPEAL/MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS — For the first time in at least a decade we are going to send a separate mailing this fall rather than enclose a renewal/annual appeal card in this issue of *Trumpetings*. We are making this change because we suspect that members will pay more attention to a specific mailing rather than one piggy-backing on *Trumpetings*. We would like to boost our annual renewal rate while reducing the need and expense of sending out second or third renewal notices. We not only want to keep you as a member, we would like you to help recruit others who care about Trumpeter Swans to join us. We know the economy has been poor, but we also know that TTSS has done a very good job with less funding. Our staff and Board have stepped up with more volunteer time to keep TTSS working on behalf of the swans. We can't expect them to do that forever. Please watch for the mailing and respond as soon as you can. We need your help and support.



PROPOSED REVISION OF TTSS ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION — In the mailing, we will also enclose a ballot for members to vote on proposed revisions of our **Articles of Incorporation**. TTSS was incorporated in Minnesota in 1982 as a nonprofit charitable organization. We need to update our Articles to reflect a new address, to clarify the size of the Board, address the roles of the Board and members, and specify how the Board may do business using electronic communications. A letter with the ballot will show the exact wording of the proposed changes. The Board has already endorsed the changes, but we need a vote of the membership to ratify them. Please take this membership task seriously and return your ballot to TTSS. For your convenience the ballot will be on the renewal/annual appeal card with an addressed return envelope.

22nd TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY CONFERENCE IN MONTANA ONE YEAR FROM NOW! Normally, we

would have had a conference in 2010, but we postponed it so as not to conflict with the International Swan Symposium (ISS) that had been scheduled to take place in Chile this month. Unfortunately, the ISS was postponed until 2011, but we can't wait any longer. Our President Dale Becker and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in the Flathead Valley of Montana have graciously agreed to host our 22nd Conference. Set aside the third week in October 2011, to get together with all of us who work for and care about the restoration and conservation of Trumpeter Swans. As always, we will welcome presentations on Tundra Swans and other relevant swan conservation issues. Stay tuned for more details as the planning for the conference continues. If you wish to



Trumpeter Swans
Beemer's Pond

contribute by formal presentation or poster, contact me at any time. Enjoy the remainder of the fall and have a great winter!

- John Cornely

GOT FARMS, GOT SWANS!



Trumpeter and Tundra Swans traditionally fed in marshes and other wetlands on aquatic vegetation. As wetlands were drained and degraded by human actions, swans learned that they could feed in grass fields.

fields. By the mid-1960s, swans in California, Oregon, and Washington were using both native and planted grass for food. In the early 1970s, swans returning to the Skagit Valley in Washington found the waste corn and pasture grass on large dairy farms very attractive. Now both Trumpeters and Tundras are feeding in dairy farms throughout western Washington and their distribution is highly correlated with the presence of these farms. When available, swans also eat carrots, potatoes, and other food crops left after harvest. I determined that at times 85 percent of the western Washington Trumpeters were using dairy farms for some or all of their winter foraging.

Dairy farms are subject to an uncertain market, offers to sell to developers, and increasing costs of operations. When we lose dairy farms, we lose swan habitat. For a number of years, TTSS has partnered with dairy farmers and the Washington Dairy Federation (WDF) to educate the public about the importance of dairy farms to Trumpeters. I have been working with WDF's Executive Director, Jay Gordon. This year through my work, TTSS assisted in producing a radio spot focusing on the relationship between the farms and swans. The spot has been played widely and received positive public feedback. Jay coined the phrase "Got Farms—Got Swans" to describe the interrelationship. TTSS applauds WDF's efforts and will continue to work with dairy farmers to preserve farms and, thus, preserve swan habitat.

- Martha Jordan

Rocky Mountain Update

Trumpeter Swan researchers and managers from throughout Greater Yellowstone and western Montana held their annual fall meeting in October in West Yellowstone, Montana. Key topics included recent survey results, the significant declines of nesting swans in Yellowstone National Park, Idaho's Island Park area, and Red Rock Lakes NWR, the importance of improving pre-breeding habitats, and updates on each of the local nesting flocks and habitat improvements.

On behalf of TTSS, I summarized our 2010 nest monitoring efforts in Idaho, our strong interest in the upcoming planning efforts for National Wildlife Refuges in Greater Yellowstone, and our efforts to summarize and analyze the past 50 years of data on Greater Yellowstone's Trumpeter Swans. This project will present the history and biology of these swans and create thoroughly-reviewed long-term data sets to guide future management decisions.

- Ruth Shea

The Trumpeter Swan Society

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"TRUMPETINGS" EDITORS

Peg Abbott, John Cornely & David K. Weaver



PHOTO CREDITS:

- Pg. 1 John VanOrman, Trumpeter Landing.
www.vanormanphoto.com. Gary D. Tonhouse, Beemer's Pond (Iowa) poster www.reflectiveimages.com
- Pg. 2 Gail Miller, Take-off, www.pbase.com/gnmimiller. Gary D. Tonhouse, Swans in Icy Pond
- Pg. 3 Paul Johnsgard, Trumpeters in Flight. John VanOrman, Two Swans.
- Pg. 4 Jess Lee, Swan Portrait. www.jessleephotos.com. Chuck Otte, maps
- Pg. 5 Jess Lee, Two Swans. Dan Hartman, Swan Stretch www.wildlifealongtherockies.homestead.com
- Pg. 6 Drawings: Paul Johnsgard, Lone Swan. Narca Moore-Craig www.narcamoorecraig.com
- Pg. 7 Greg Smith, www.flickr.com/photos/slobirdr/ Snow Geese, Gail Miller, Trumpeter Wingstretch Cover/Mailer: Jess Lee, Two Trumpeters
- Backcover : Gary D. Tonhouse Beemer's Pond Poster – Dedicated to Iowa's Trumpeter Swan Program Volunteers

TRUMPETER WATCH: THE SECOND SEASON

The Trumpeter Swan Society Partners with “eBird”

Trumpeter Watch is starting its second winter season and we ask that all members and associates report Trumpeter Swan sightings, particularly in states south of the 40th parallel. Based on last year's numbers in southern states, the winter 2010/2011 should be an exciting one – particularly if we can expand participation in sightings.

We hope to make reporting easy for you by partnering with “eBird,” the popular data reporting program of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, in conjunction with the Avian Knowledge Network. Their system is easy to learn, and once you've set up a free account with password, you can report sightings, browse through data, and take a look at your state or province for current and historical data. Your sightings will be part of a global database available to biologists, wildlife managers, teachers, and birders.

The “eBird” program has revolutionized the way that the birding community accesses and reports information since its start-up in 2002. It is designed to record basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales – just the type of information we are looking for as we monitor Trumpeter Swan populations over a large geographic area.

One of the best things about “eBird” is the immediate ability of the program to show data with dynamic maps and bar charts that detail relative abundance over time. Last winter, we kept in-house maps to chart the bird's activities, but had no way to share them efficiently with you. In partnering with “eBird,” your sighting will appear as a dot on a Google Map, one that you can zoom in or out to look at an individual

county, a state, or up to a five-state area.



Both recreational and professional observers contribute sightings to “eBird.” Each state has knowledgeable coordinators that review sightings, using a set of filters to check for data accuracy if a species is rare or of particular interest. TTSS will be able to work with these coordinators and to access comments included with the observation as to age, flock size, and other statistics.

The “eBird” staff hopes that Trumpeter Watch observers will report other species as well as Trumpeters, and we encourage this. It helps TTSS to know what other types of waterfowl are found in lakes, wetlands, or feeding sites, and it's fun for you to add a Bald Eagle or other species seen that day. If you do not have a computer and want to send in sightings by mail, Peg Abbott, Outreach Coordinator, will forward the records for you once received.

We report Trumpeter Watch progress in our ENEWS and on Facebook, so if you have not yet signed on, log on to website and request the free ENEWS. If you do not have a computer and wish us to send copy by mail, please request that we do so.

The Trumpeter Swan Society Board of Directors

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Trumpeters Return to Winter in Kansas

A Review Article by Chuck Otte

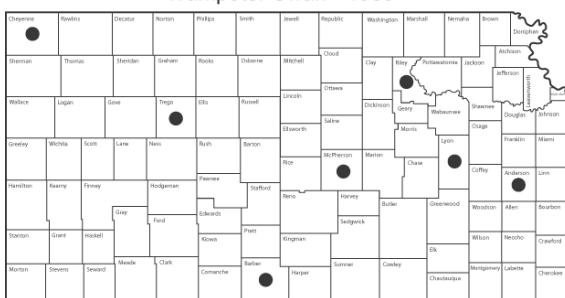
President, Kansas Ornithological Society

In 1989, Thompson and Ely, in *Birds of Kansas, Volume I*, stated that the "Trumpeter Swan was probably a former transient during the 19th century, but no specimens or documented sightings exist from that period." In fact, Thompson and Ely indicated that there were documented sightings from only seven counties in Kansas, virtually all from the 1980s. They end with the rather upbeat, "These observations suggest that the Trumpeter Swan may become a regular transient and/or winter visitor in Kansas." Thompson and Ely were very prescient in this regard!

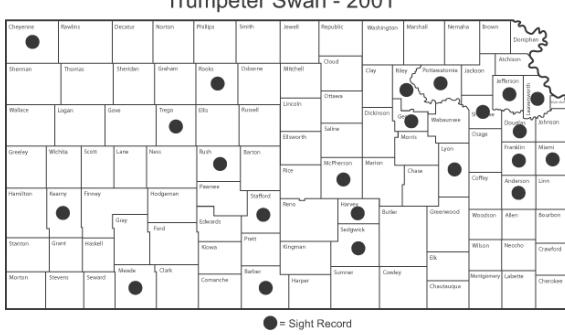
Let's fast forward to 2010. Trumpeters have now been documented in 57 counties in Kansas and are expected annually anywhere in the eastern two thirds of the state. In recent years, they have been recorded and photographed in marshes, wetlands, and grain fields. They barely warrant a comment in rare bird alerts anymore.

There has always been concern over confusion between Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. What has happened over the past 20 years is an

Trumpeter Swan - 1989



Trumpeter Swan - 2001



interesting reversal in which species is expected and which is considered "rare."

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Kansas birders expected a swan in Kansas to be a Tundra Swan not a Trumpeter Swan. While both species are now seen annually, the expectation across much of the state is that if a swan is seen it will probably be a Trumpeter.

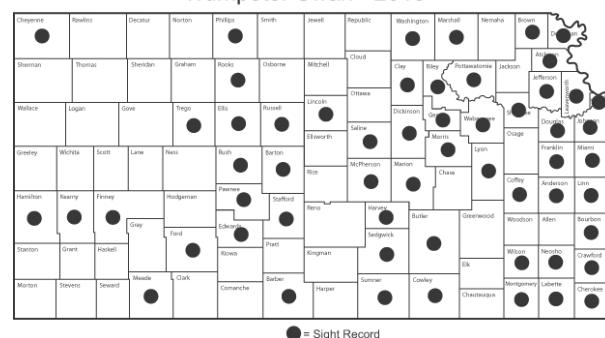
In 2001, the Kansas County Checklist Project was started. At that time, Trumpeter Swans had been documented in 22 Kansas counties. From 1989 to 2001 that was an increase of 15 counties. In the 9 years since 2001, there has been a 35-county increase from 22 to 57

counties. These numbers are probably going to grow each and every year.

The reestablishment of wintering Trumpeter Swans is also evident in the results of annual Christmas Bird Counts in Kansas. Looking at these counts since 1961, Trumpeter Swans were not even reported until 1991 when two different counts reported a total of six birds. Since 1991, Trumpeters have been reported on Christmas Bird Counts in 14 of 19 years. An impressive 18 birds were reported in 2008.

Expectedly, most reports are from November through February with a growing number of reports from March and rarely into April. Originally, Trumpeters were only being seen in wetlands, reservoirs, and rivers. Over the past couple of years, perhaps because birders are

Trumpeter Swan - 2010



expecting them and looking for them anywhere in the winter season, we are getting more reports of Trumpeters feeding in wet grain fields, foraging for grain.

While the Trumpeter Swan is not on the Kansas Bird Records Committee review list, reports of Trumpeter Swans continue to be monitored as we track the ever-growing numbers of this magnificent waterfowl in Kansas!

Those interested in monitoring the continued expansion of Trumpeter Swans in Kansas can access maps at the Kansas County Checklist Project website home page. Scroll down to the link to the species county dot maps and then follow the instructions to find Trumpeter Swans.

The Kansas County Checklist Project

The Kansas County Checklist Project was undertaken by Chuck Otte to gather as many resources as possible, -- e.g., KBBAT (Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas) databases, KOS member sightings, Southwestern College Bird Sightings database -- and produce a checklist for each of Kansas' 105 counties. It does not necessarily reflect accepted records of the Kansas Bird Records Committee or the Kansas Ornithological Society, but at least some attempt at consistency and reliability is used. It is intended to reflect the current records of bird sightings on file, somewhere, for each county.

http://ksbirds.org/checklist/checklist_index.htm



unbanded and untagged, and raised discussion among Tennessee birders on the status of the swans.

In 2010, three separate records of Trumpeters were documented. In Dyer and adjacent Lake County, three juvenile birds appeared to move back and forth between two locations from late January through late February 2010. They were most commonly seen in the Philliply Pits area just off the Mississippi River near Reelfoot Lake, but also were thought to be the same birds seen occasionally at a private pond in Dyer County. On 22-25 February 2010, a juvenile Trumpeter Swan was seen and photographed at close range at Graham Lake in Madison County. In early January, a juvenile Trumpeter Swan was shot on a state refuge in Weakley County by hunters claiming they thought the bird was a Snow Goose. The three men were convicted in a plea bargain agreement. An anonymous caller that reported the shooting suggested that the poacher had been shooting at a flock of seven swans, although this was not confirmed.

TRUMPETER SWANS IN TENNESSEE

An Update from Scott Somershoe
State Ornithologist
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

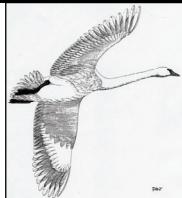
Trumpeter Swans went unreported in Tennessee for over 170 years until three birds were documented on a state waterfowl refuge in 2001. Unfortunately, two of these birds were shot and one later died. Prior to this sighting in 2001, the previously documented Trumpeter Swans in Tennessee were seen by John James Audubon in 1820. Trumpeters have since been documented an additional six times.

Although Tennessee Trumpeter Swan reports are scattered across the state, the majority have occurred in the western counties along the Mississippi River with a couple reports from larger lakes in more easterly counties. In 2009, a pair of adult swans was reported on a large pond in Dyer County. These birds were

Trumpeter Swans are still rare in Tennessee. However, with multiple records in the last 2 years, we suspect they will become the most common swan in Tennessee within the next 5 to 10 years. The growing numbers of Trumpeters in the adjacent states of Arkansas and Missouri will likely be the source of birds expanding into Tennessee. Through the Tennessee Bird Records Committee and eBird.org, we have developed some resources for identification compared to the almost-as-rare Tundra Swan. Hopefully, we'll adequately document more Trumpeters in Tennessee in the coming years.



GREATER YELLOWSTONE: An Update from Doug Smith, Yellowstone National Park, and Laura Cockrell, Graduate Student



Graduate Student Project Evaluates Remote Sensing to Assess and Monitor Changing Habitat Conditions in Yellowstone National Park

Doug Smith, a biologist for Yellowstone National Park, helped Laura Cockrell set up the field work she is doing on Trumpeter Swans for her Master's degree. Within the park, she is testing a tool that she hopes could be used by managers to assess habitat quality in a cost-effective way. The park and surrounding lands of the Yellowstone region have extensive areas that are difficult to access or sample. Laura is looking at the utility of data from satellite imagery, which is updated frequently and is available over a large area. She shares this about her work:

Evaluation of Historical Nest Site Use by Trumpeter Swans in Yellowstone National Park. Laura Cockrell, Eastern Kentucky University (MS Thesis) and Dr. Bob Frederick, Eastern Kentucky University (Advisor)

Surveys of the Rocky Mountain Population indicate that the population makes up less than 10 percent of the total Trumpeter Swan numbers in North America. Within Yellowstone National Park, nesting swans have dramatically decreased over the last 30 years, and are regarded as "imperiled" by the State of Wyoming.

During the 2009 breeding season, only three pairs of Trumpeter Swans occurred in the park, with only one pair attempting to nest. Pairs outside the park have also recently declined in nesting attempts and cygnets produced.

Within the park, there are no management efforts in place to improve or create nesting sites. If conditions continue to change in an unfavorable manner, it is possible that resident swans could disappear from the park entirely, though in time conditions may change. Wildlife managers outside the park, on wildlife refuges and other public lands, have greater flexibility to manage habitat for swans. Across the ecosystem, Trumpeters often nest in remote regions which are difficult to access and monitor.

If this study succeeds, we should discern differences between good and poor habitat and identify local and landscape-level features that

may have changed over the years, which influence nesting preference and success of breeding Trumpeter Swans. This study involves using LANDSAT imagery to find good Trumpeter Swan nesting habitat based on the spectral reflectance shown through the aerial images of wetlands. The final project analysis will include a comparison of recent vs. historic imagery to determine if the satellite images can be useful to detect changes in the habitat over time.

Some of our work takes place in the field to ground truth the LANDSAT imagery. Over the course of two seasons, we sampled 16 wetlands in 2009 and 20 sites in 2010, which were recorded as historical or current Trumpeter Swan nesting sites within Yellowstone National Park. By using UTM coordinates of line transects within nesting territories and vegetation samples collected on-site, we will characterize and evaluate whether the LANDSAT reflectance can be used to determine habitat suitability for swans in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. In-field evaluations include identifying vegetation along line transects to a depth of <4ft, and assessing water quality and growing conditions of aquatic plants through measures such as temperature and pH at nesting territories. Sediment samples were collected and are being tested for the presence of lead within wetland areas. Habitat quality will be determined based on food availability, as adequate food supplies must exist for pairs to successfully reproduce. If the model works, we should be able to identify areas with adequate food supply by Image Analysis software as potentially good nesting sites. These techniques may prove useful across much of the range of Trumpeter Swans.



This project was funded through a grant provided by the Yellowstone Park Foundation and the Society of Wetland Scientists

Student Research Grant. Doug Smith hopes to see this and other information utilized at a spring workshop on Trumpeter Swans to be scheduled in Bozeman, Montana. Ruth Shea, coordinator of TTSS Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Initiative, will be involved in this workshop.

BREAKING NEWS

Agency Decision Threatens Trumpeter Swans in Idaho



A recent decision by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to expand a late winter Snow Goose hunt in southeast Idaho would jeopardize Trumpeter Swan use of important prebreeding habitat near Fort Hall at the north end of American Falls Reservoir. TTSS is asking IDFG and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to reverse this decision and protect Trumpeter Swans in this area.

TTSS is not “antihunting.” Several TTSS staff and Board members have been long-term managers of waterfowl hunts during their careers and TTSS is not opposed to well-managed waterfowl hunting. However, the design of this hunt is flawed. It would jeopardize important Trumpeter Swan habitat-use patterns that took many years, great effort, and great expense to create.

Beginning in 1988, the USFWS, the Pacific Flyway Council, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Idaho, several other western states, and TTSS undertook a massive effort to disperse wintering Trumpeter Swans from high elevation areas of Harriman State Park, Idaho, and Red Rock Lakes NWR (RRLNWR), Montana. The goal was to encourage migrations southward to milder wintering sites where swans would gain access to new winter and early spring food sources.

This very difficult effort included termination of winter feeding at RRLNWR, massive hazing of swans from high-risk sites, and relocation of over 250 Trumpeters Swans to Fort Hall from RRLNWR (101), Harriman State Park (135), and from captive rearing (25+). Agencies spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to build the

new migration to Fort Hall to help increase population security. Winter translocations involved nighttime capture on icy waters, often at near-zero temperatures, with great risk to those who braved those dangerous conditions.

The American Falls wintering area is the biggest success of the range expansion effort, with over 500 Trumpeters present in recent winters. Swans have gradually learned to field feed in areas north and west of the reservoir in late winter. Late-winter nutrition is key to nesting success of the region's Trumpeters and regional managers are struggling to protect and enhance these crucial prebreeding habitats. The proposed hunt expansion would open the most important swan prebreeding habitats to Snow Goose hunting from February 19 to March 10, when these areas normally receive heavy swan use.



www.trumpeterswansociety.org

TTSS will ask IDFG to reverse the hunt expansion and maintain at least the same secure areas provided by the 2010 hunt boundary. We also ask that IDFG closely monitor the distribution of swans and geese in the American Falls area during the hunt and take immediate measures to prevent hunter activity from displacing swans from their normal feeding areas if problems arise.

The USFWS and IDFG should also examine potential impacts of continuing a Snow Goose hunt in this area. Our primary concern is that any late hunt will concentrate Snow Geese in the closed areas with swans, thus increasing the potential for crop damage in the closed area, as well as disease transmission from geese to swans. Watch our website for updates on this issue.
- Ruth Shea