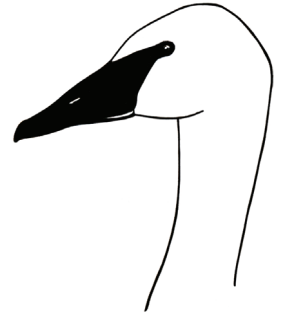




TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society

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

Vol. XXI No. 1

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From the Executive Director

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Because of the unbelievable support of our loyal members and the foundations that agree that Trumpeter conservation is important we are on track to have a "normal" year financially. I hope that momentum will carry on. Your response is humbling. With your assistance and the dedication of your volunteer Board, we will not only continue our work, but expand it.

Join us in Montana in October — The 22nd Trumpeter Swan Society Conference is October 11 - 13 in Polson, Montana, at the Best Western KwaTaqNuk Resort on the shore of beautiful

Flathead Lake. Our host is TTSS President Dale Becker, the leader of the Tribal Wildlife Management Program for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. We will have 2 days of presentations and a day-long field trip to see Trumpeter restoration projects in the Flathead and Blackfoot valleys. We hope to see each and every one of you there! More details and a call for papers are in this issue.

Silent auction items needed — We like to have a silent auction and raffle at each conference to raise funds for the Society. If you are an artist or craftsperson and would like to donate an item or items for this purpose, we would be thrilled. At our last conference in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, we set a record, raising over \$2,000 for the cause. Obviously, swan-related items go over the best, but other wildlife-related things go well, too. I have it on good authority that some bottles of Trumpeter Swan wine from Oregon will go to the highest bidders. Contact me or Dale Becker for more information.

We NEED a few great women and men — Our elections for Directors and Officers will be in October just before the conference. We have openings that need to be filled and need your help in identifying good candidates. We need to diversify. So, in addition to our outstanding swan biologists, we could use a director with an investment background, legal expertise, business management experience, and/or communications skills. Please share your ideas with me or one of the Board Members. We need to add some skill sets to our tool box to take the next step up as a conservation leader.



Passing the torch to the next generation of biologists, managers, and conservationists — Several events in recent years have raised a red flag indicating that we are not successfully transferring our waterfowl and wetland management knowledge and experience to those who take the reins from us. Stay tuned for more on this issue and discussions at the conference. This is a very serious issue and TTSS is in a position to take the lead when it comes to Trumpeter conservation. We can't afford to let history repeat itself and can't wait to get started building a bridge of knowledge and experience to the future.

See you in Polson!

- John Cornely

ANNOUNCING: The 22nd Trumpeter Swan Society Conference, October 11-13, Polson, Montana

The 22nd Trumpeter Swan Society Conference will be held this year in Polson, Montana, United States, on October 11-13, 2011. The biennial conferences of TTSS provide the only public forum in North America that brings together private citizens and conservation groups, policy makers, swan managers, and researchers to examine the status and needs of Trumpeter Swans in the U.S. and Canada and to work together to make all populations secure.



The 22nd Conference will focus on both the successes and challenges involved with long-term management of Trumpeter Swans. Special attention will also be given to the status, management, and conservation of Trumpeter Swans in the Pacific Flyway. Presentations will examine the restoration accomplishments and lessons learned and discuss the future challenges to Trumpeter Swan conservation. In addition, the conference will include sessions on the biology, habitat concerns, and management of Trumpeter Swan populations throughout North America. Papers and posters on the biology and management of Tundra Swans and Mute Swans and/or their interactions with Trumpeter Swans are also invited.

We strongly encourage private partners, agency managers, and biologists involved in Trumpeter Swan restoration, management, and research to participate. Please see our website for more details on the conference and visiting Montana.

CALL FOR PAPERS

If you are interested in making a presentation at the 22nd Conference, please contact John Cornely (303-933-9861) jcornely@trumpeterswansociety.org; Dale Becker at daleb@cskt.org or Ruth Shea at rshea@trumpeterswansociety.org for additional information, including presentation guidelines and submission dates.



TTSS Welcomes New Members from 3 Nations: 3 Provinces and 17 States

CANADA: Alberta: Peter Meiring – Calgary, Brett Sarchuk – Fort Saskatchewan; **British Columbia:** Steph Nathan – Courtenay, Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society - Duncan, Peter Sulzle – Kamloops;

Ontario: Sari & Joseph Grove – Toronto, Jill Ramsay – Scarborough, Matthew Fells – Barrie, Margarite Botting – Burlington.

UK: Mrs. Marci Macklin – Staffordshire.

USA: California: Richard Lanman – Los Altos, Kim Snowden – Chico, Eleanor Tayte & Family –

Pasadena; **Colorado:** Chlotille Scheckel – Parker, Michael Rosenberg – Carbondale; **Florida:** Trudi Buscemi – Tampa; **Georgia:** James Pulliam – Big

Canoe; **Iowa:** Marcia Nance – Storm Lake, **Idaho:** Dean Millsap – Idaho Falls; **Illinois:** Lynn Stone – Saint Charles, Scott Smith – Oak Park; **Kansas:**

Janice Cornely – Cawker City; **Kentucky:** David Pike – Shepardsville; **Michigan:** Vivian Lee – Ann Arbor,

L.K. Murphy – Plainwell, Steve & Char Harryman – Fruitport; **Minnesota:** Laura Finazzo – Minnetonka, Tracy Knighton – Coon Rapids, Loll Designs

(www.lolldesigns.com) – Duluth, Bemd Ruttkowski – Spring Park, Tammy Wolfe – Lake Elmo;

Pennsylvania: Marilyn Rosengrant – Dover; **Texas:**

Marie Mulling – Cedar Park, **Vermont:** Sandra Bissex – Montpelier; **Washington:** Irene Billa & Ellen Brubaker – Snohomish, Susan Denham – Burlington, Tom & Pamela Foggin – Anacortes, Rebecca

Hannigan – Kent, Jan Hunt – Woodinville, Joanne Mattson – Arlington, Richard & Louise McLachlin –

Bellevue, George & Joann Nichols – Seattle, Jan Viney – Bothell; **Wisconsin:** Ben Gartman –

Sheyboygan, Donald Prihoda – Amery; **Wyoming:** Karen & Jesse O'Connor – Jackson.

This list welcomes those joining since our last post in the March 2010 Trumpetings.

Recent News from Dave Hoffman, Iowa

Thanks to everyone who reported or took part in the Trumpeter Swan Survey this year. The Iowa midwinter survey tallied 289 Trumpeter Swans in Iowa during the first week of January 2011. Beemer's Pond near Webster City, Iowa, had the highest count in late November with 162 swans reported. Other winter reports included: 46 at Atlantic Quarry, 36 at Nora Springs, and 25 on a private pond at Bob and Mary Boock's. *Find more on this story on our TTSS BLOG.*

Iowa State University's Trumpeter Restoration Committee (TSRC), established in 1994,

Trumpeting the Cause



is partnering with TTSS to produce maps for our Trumpeter Watch program as Tyler Harms and Mica Rumbach share their expertise with GIS and mapping technology. This organization of talented

and dedicated students supports Trumpeter Swan Restoration in Iowa by raising funds through the annual banquet, last year raising more than \$2,000 for the swans. Back issues of their newsletter, *Trumpeting the Cause*, can be viewed on their website: www.stuorg.iastate.edu/swan/.

THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY BOARD of DIRECTORS & STAFF

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"TRUMPETINGS" EDITORS

Peg Abbott, John Cornely, & David K. Weaver

PHOTO CREDITS:

Pg. 1 Photo: *Hal Everett*. Drawings: *Narca Moore-Craig*.



Pg. 2 Three Swans, Foggy Morning, *Paul Krumrei*. Swan Flying in Trees, *Gail Miller*.
Pg. 3 Drawing – *Narca Moore-Craig*. Swans in Flight, *Patricia Meyer*.

Trumpeter Swan with Merganser, *Wayne Shawl*.
Pg. 4 Carl Mitchell and Kelly Beisen at Work, *Idaho Fish and Game Dept.* Lone Swan in Flight, *Hal Everett*.
Pg. 5 Photos: Swans in Trailer and Dale Becker and Janene Lichtenberg, biologist Confed. Salish and Kootanai Tribes (CSKT), *CSKT Tribal Wildlife Management Program*.
Pg. 6 Swans at Squaw Creek in Flight, *Jim Braswell* www.showmenaturephotography.com. Swans Take Flight, *Mark Paulson* www.markpaulsonphotography.com.
Swans on Ice, *John VanOrman* (new website – www.vanormanphotography.photoshelter.com).
Pg. 7 Swans at Teslin Lake, *Adam Skrutkowski*. Drawing, *Paul Johnsgard*.
Cover: Swan Portrait, *Bill Hubick* www.billhubick.com
Back cover : Swan Coming Right at You, *Mark Paulson* www.markpaulsonphotography.com.

MICHIGAN'S AU SABLE RIVER SWANS



The Trumpeter Swan survey in north-central Michigan, part of the continentwide 2010 North American Swan Survey, was conducted by the Forest Service and the Au Sable Valley Audubon. Paul Thompson, Wildlife Biologist with Huron-Manistee National Forest, writes to say: *We tried to cover all suitable habitat within the proclamation boundary of the Huron National Forest, which covers a four-county area of northeastern Michigan, including all or portions of Iosco, Alcona, Oscoda, and Ogemaw Counties.* December counts ranged from 21 to 150+ and January remained strong with 44 and 62 the initial part of the month. Learn more about the Au Sable River swans and their success on the TTSS BLOG, which you can quickly access through the TTSS website. – *Peggy Ridgway*

YUKON'S CELEBRATION OF SWANS

Yukon's premiere bird festival will take place April 16-24, 2011. Last year, nearly 2500 Trumpeter Swans arrived at Marsh Lake and M'Clintock Bay in time for the festival. For information contact Swan Haven Interpretation Center in Whitehorse (867-667-8291) or see the *Environment Yukon* website.

TTSS's Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Initiative (GYTSI)

KEY PROJECTS: 2011

- **Idaho Swan Stewards** – TTSS is establishing a new working group in Idaho with a goal of building a group of knowledgeable citizens to help solve problems facing swans in Idaho. We must help all those whose daily decisions impact the swans and their habitat to understand the conservation needs of the swans, involving landowners, fishermen, county/state/federal decision makers, water users, waterfowl hunters, conservation groups, and the state university in the process.
- **Yellowstone National Park (YNP) Trumpeter Swan Workshop** – The National Park Service is gravely concerned about the almost total loss of nesting swans in Yellowstone. In April, they will bring together a group of swan and wetland experts to consider the situation and make recommendations. TTSS is working with Yellowstone biologists and park archives staff to catalog data for this workshop.
- **Idaho Trumpeter Swan Management Plan** – TTSS will be working closely with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to help them create a state management plan that would help clarify their objectives, site-specific problems, priorities, and best solutions, and step-down the broader Pacific Flyway plan to a more workable set of local tasks that partners can help to accomplish.
- **Bridging the Centuries** – One of the greatest challenges is to figure out how to summarize and package the accumulated past century of knowledge of Trumpeter Swans in Greater Yellowstone into 21st century technology to make the information readily available to the next generation of decision makers. TTSS is currently working with IDFG and YNP to explore various options to package and convey their historic information.
- **Monitoring** – Fieldwork will be conducted to assess the nesting swans in Idaho north of Idaho Falls from May -September.

YOUR HELP IS WELCOME!

For more information or to volunteer for GYTSI projects, PLEASE contact: Ruth Shea at rshea@trumpeterswansociety.org.

TTSS HONORS CARL MITCHELL



After 32 years of working with many wildlife species from New Mexico to Alaska, long-term TTSS member and swan expert Carl Mitchell retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the end of 2010. Most recently, Carl has lived at Grays Lake NWR in Idaho where he served as a wildlife biologist for the Southeast Idaho NWR Complex. He has dreams of a retirement filled with increased swan research, fieldwork, and much fun.



Carl has been a most helpful member of TTSS since 1984, serving on our Board from 1989-1993. He is one of the long-term biologists who has worked to address the serious problems facing the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeters since the early 1980s. Carl served as the North American Swan Research Coordinator for the Swan Specialist Group of Wetlands International, 1989-2010. He has also contributed greatly to public understanding of Trumpeter Swans by writing the first species account on Trumpeters in 1994 for *The Birds of North America*, as well as a later online version which he updated with Michael Eichholz in 2010.

Carl reminisces that he was very, very lucky to work at Red Rock Lakes NWR in the 1980s, where he got involved with TTSS and met many swan friends and mentors. He feels most fortunate to have had the chance to stick with swan work through the years, even though his overall job duties were much more diverse.

We wish Carl good health and much happiness, and many more very productive years working to make Trumpeter Swans more secure. Thanks for all you have done!
- Ruth Shea

A Good Year on the Flathead: A Montana Update from Dale Becker, Tribal Wildlife Manager, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, and TTSS Board President



The Tribal Wildlife Management Program, with state, federal, and local partners, initiated a project to reintroduce Trumpeter Swans in the wetland habitats of the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana in 2001. The project, similar to some in the Midwest, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, utilizes captive-reared Trumpeter Swans for release into suitable wetland habitats. It is part of a multi-agency effort to rebuild Trumpeter Swan populations.



The Tribal Wildlife Management Program contracts with the Wyoming Wetlands Society/Trumpeter Swan Fund and the Montana Waterfowl Foundation to obtain swans. These facilities are fully licensed and hold breeding pairs of Trumpeter Swans of the proper genetic stock for this project. Between 2002 and 2010, 191 captive-reared Trumpeter Swans have been released on the Reservation. Thirty swans were released at nearby Pablo National Wildlife Refuge in June and July of 2010.

The goal of the reintroduction project is 10 successful breeding pairs of Trumpeter Swans on the Reservation. The first nesting by released swans occurred in 2004, when two pairs nested and produced cygnets. In 2007, nesting activity took a significant leap, with seven pairs of swans nesting. These attempts resulted in the production of 21 cygnets, 16 survived to fledge in late September. In 2010, nine nesting pairs were documented; seven were successful, producing 25 cygnets, of which

20 survived to fledge. These cygnets will assist significantly in the eventual success of the project in restoring this magnificent species as a viable component of the wildlife community of the Reservation.

Learn more by visiting the Flathead region October 11-13 at the 22nd Trumpeter Swan Society Conference in Polson, Montana. For further information about the project or the conference, please contact Dale Becker at (406) 883-2888 or by email at daleb@cskt.org.

The most significant mortality factor encountered by Trumpeters released on the Reservation has been collisions with overhead power lines. Tribal wildlife biologists, with funding assistance from a hydroelectric mitigation settlement for Kerr Dam and a USFWS Tribal Wildlife Grant, have worked closely with the staff of Mission Valley Power to mark lines at collision and potential collision sites with Firefly Diverters marketed by Swift Creek Consulting. These markers are attached to power lines to make them more visible to birds. This marking project has reduced

significantly swan mortality due to collisions.

Future plans for the project include continuing release of captive-reared swans for at least 2 more years. In addition, marking of power lines and other measures will continue in an effort to further reduce swan-line collisions. Monitoring of reproduction and survival of cygnets will continue to assess the success of the project.



A WASHINGTON STATE UPDATE

by Martha Jordan

January 21, 2011, *Miller McCune*, ran an article in their online *Environment* section on the ongoing problems with lead shot and Trumpeters in the Pacific Northwest entitled, ***Trumpeter Swans Try to Dodge a Bullet: Having survived an extinction scare a century ago, the world's largest waterfowl is stalked by the remnants of past shotgun blasts.*** Find a link to this story on our website, www.trumpeterswansociety.org.

TRUMPETER WATCH: Trumpeter Swan Occurrence on Squaw Creek NWR Darrin Welchert, Wildlife Biologist

After Trumpeter Swan reintroductions occurred in central North America, sporadic Trumpeter observations began around 1994 on Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge (SCNWR) during weekly waterfowl counts. SCNWR is nestled on the western edge of the Mississippi Flyway located in Holt County, Missouri, just 5 miles from the Missouri River. The refuge is comprised of 7,415 acres of which 3,409 acres are wetlands. SCNWR typically hosts over 300,000 geese, 100,000 ducks, and 200 eagles each year. Both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans can be found during fall and/or spring migration.



More consistent Trumpeter Swan use has been documented in recent years with their numbers steadily increasing from January 2000 to 2011 (see a color chart of this progression on our TTSS Blog).

Swans started to show up during December, January, February, and March from 2000 to 2005. Observations in November and April began in the fall of 2006. The months with highest swan use are December and January with birds feeding, loafing, and roosting in the remaining open water typically surrounded by ice in wetland

impoundments. Once wetlands freeze up completely, birds move out of the area. Trumpeter numbers started in single digits (ranging 1-8) from January 2000 to December 2005, grew to double digits (ranging 12-78) over the next 4 years, and peaked to 148 swans on December 18, 2009.

Collars observed are reported in writing by mail or by email to The Trumpeter Swan Society (trumpeterwatch@trumpeterswansociety.org) and U.S. Geological Survey, Bird Banding Laboratory (www.reportband.gov). This season (2010-2011) a total of five marked birds was documented with two observed on December 3, 2010, and 3 observed on both January 3 and 5, 2011. All collared birds observed this season had red neck collars and originated from different areas in Iowa having been hatched from 2004 to 2006.



TRUMPETER WATCH HIGHLIGHTS

Trumpeter Watch has really taken off, with over 50 sightings coming in to our office by mail and email in January, with another 25 or more reports and photos coming in via our Blog and Facebook. Here are some highlights:

♦ A Missouri observer reports that "Trumpeters seem to have taken over MO this year!" Sightings are coming in from all parts of the state, and groups of 30 or more swans are not uncommon. ♦ Kansas also has good numbers over a wide range, with three new counties in the southeast recording Trumpeters for the first time. Crawford County, one of the three, had 53 spotted in one location. Squaw Creek NWR numbers have passed 150 (see article this issue of *Trumpetings*). ♦ Sightings have continued in Kentucky where and Iowa bird, Red 6H5, returned for a second winter to Otter Pond, Caldwell Co., kept company by two Wisconsin-collared Trumpeters. 6H5 spent winter in Wisconsin during 2006 and 2008 – a well-traveled bird! ♦ Another well-traveled bird is reported by Karen Rowe, a collared bird that proves movement between Arkansas and Minnesota. ♦ Scott Somershoe describes two locales in Tennessee reporting Trumpeters, one in the far northwest (4 adults), the other Putnam County (2 adults). ♦ Through our TTSS Blog, we've been able to connect Tundra Swan researcher Craig Ely of Alaska to two winter sightings of "his" blue collared Tundra Swans, one in British Columbia and the other in Calgary. ♦ A cygnet has recently been reported with photographs from Virginia.

Trumpeter Watch has expanded this year to include several western states. ♦ Keen-eyed observers in California report 10 Trumpeters amid huge flocks of Tundras, including a collared bird from the Oregon Restoration program.

♦ Observers in southern Polk County, Oregon have noted a group of at least 45 Trumpeters, including 7 cygnets.

Trumpeters Wintering at Teslin Lake, Yukon



Trumpeter Swan family at Johnson's Crossing, Yukon, January 31, 2011

Report: Jim Hawkings

Photo: Adam Skrutkowski

Once again, this winter, a small group of Trumpeter Swans has remained near Johnson's Crossing, Yukon (60.48 N, 133.3 W), attempting to survive in the winter in open water maintained by the outflow of Teslin Lake into the Teslin River. Local resident Adam Skrutkowski has been keeping a regular eye on the birds, reporting on their status almost every weekend. In early December, there were 24 swans, and after some pretty cold and nasty weather later in the month and again in mid-January, the number has shrunk to seven (a family of two adults with five cygnets) as of January 31, 2011. Adam reports the temperature in the local area dropped to -48 C on the weekend of January 15 -- Ouch! There is a good chance these hardy survivors will make it through the rest of the winter if they can get through the next few weeks. They should have a few comrades coming back from the south beginning in March. Travelers on the Alaska Highway may be able to catch a glimpse of these birds from either end of the highway bridge at Johnson's Crossing.

UPDATE FROM ALASKA: Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

The 2-million-acre Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (KENWR) in south-central Alaska, two-thirds of which is designated Wilderness, supports an expanding Trumpeter Swan population on more than 4,600 lakes. This is particularly good news given that of all the North American subpopulations sampled by Oyler-

McCance et al. (2006), the swans collected on the Kenai had the highest level of allelic richness (i.e., genetic diversity).

Little was known about Trumpeter Swans in 1957 when the first aerial Trumpeter Swan survey was initiated by Dave Spencer on the Kenai Peninsula. From 1957 through 1984, the known population on KENWR remained at ~ 30 nesting pairs despite a 2-fold increase in swan numbers throughout the rest of Alaska. Our 1985 Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) recognized that populations of Trumpeter Swans were depressed, apparently due to human activities. To help ameliorate human disturbance, the 1985 CCP prohibited aircraft landings on lakes used by nesting Trumpeter Swans and/or their broods from May 1 through September 30. This regulation also resulted in the removal of several aircraft taxi-operator and boat-equipped tent camps on refuge lakes. Additionally, motorized boats were also restricted on part of the Kenai River used by spring staging swans. The breeding population increased rapidly and steadily after aircraft regulations were put into place, with more than 50 pairs currently nesting on KENWR. However, declining mean brood size over this same time interval also suggests that optimum breeding habitat may be saturated.



Despite these successes within KENWR, human disturbance on lakes outside refuge boundaries may be hindering the establishment of new pairs elsewhere on the Kenai Peninsula. The number of nesting pairs has only increased on lakes within KENWR (despite decreased habitat availability due to refuge boundary adjustments and land exchanges) and not on lakes outside KENWR boundaries. Nesting habitat in KENWR, particularly on closed-basin lakes, is likely to continue declining in the future because of increased water body evaporation due to a warming climate (> 60% of recently sampled water bodies experienced some level of drying). Other management concerns include renewed State and public interest in aircraft access, increasing levels of recreational use, and declining beaver populations. Consequently, the 2010 CCP will maintain these restrictions, but we will modify the above closure date to 40 September 10 to be consistent with other aircraft regulations.

- John M. Morton, USFWS

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

Photo: Bill Hubick www.billhubick.com



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THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY

Assuring the Vitality and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans

The 2010 Trumpeter Swan Survey for Minnesota was conducted January 5-8, 2011, and yielded an estimate of 6,070 Trumpeter Swans. The survey was coordinated by Three Rivers Park District in conjunction with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program and TTSS as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 5-year North American survey. Within Minnesota, 5,470 Trumpeters were counted. Percentage of cygnets was estimated at 26.2 percent, based on locations in Minnesota where the distinction was made between white (adult) and gray (cygnet) swans. It was not possible to determine adults vs. cygnets from aerial photos taken of swans on the Mississippi River (n=3,000), but there is no reason to believe that the ratio was different. An additional 600 Trumpeters are believed to be wintering in Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and other states to the south. The vast majority of Minnesota swans are now unmarked, making it difficult to determine the percentage of Minnesota swans in southern states, but this number is small compared to the number of swans wintering in Minnesota. In the last North American survey, completed in 2005, 2000 swans were tallied. The survey included aerial surveys funded by the USFWS Region 3 and ground observations by many volunteers in 14 Minnesota counties. Southwestern Ontario is included in this estimate because of close ties that link these groups through the annual cycle of migration and breeding.



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