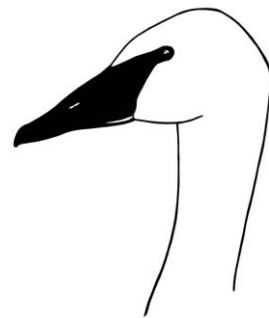




TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society

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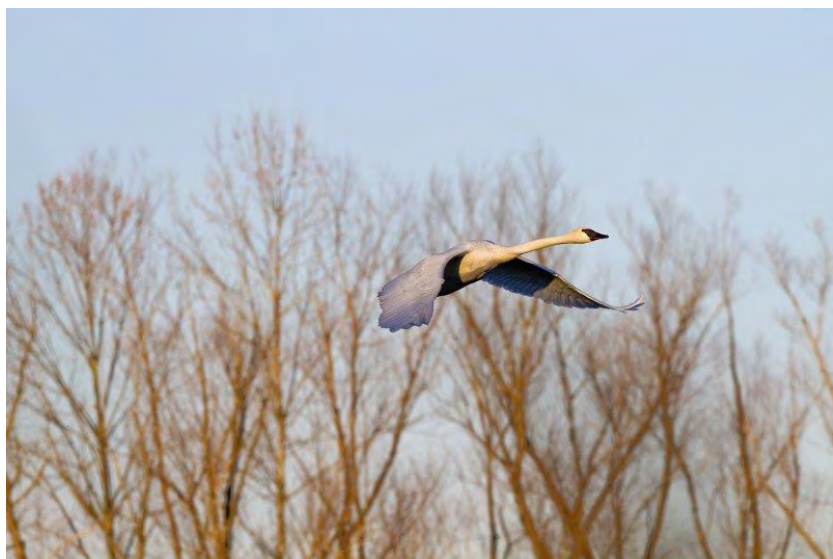
Since 1968: Assuring the Vitality and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans

VOL. XXIII No.3

NOVEMBER 2013

IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

From the Director



At the end of this year, I will step down as the Executive Director of TTSS. I will have spent almost 7 years in this position and I have enjoyed it very much. It has been an honor to be on the team. However, it is time to retire for the second time to spend more time on other priorities. I am not leaving, I'm just changing roles for the next chapter. I have agreed to volunteer as Senior Conservation Advisor to TTSS. I will assist with communications with government agencies and other organizations and work on special projects from time to time. This will keep me

involved, but allow more time for grandkids, conservation history projects, fishing and hunting.

In the last few years, we have diversified our Board, developed and updated needed policy, and, most of all, done an incredible amount of swan conservation for such a small group with relatively limited resources. It is time for a new leader, who is hopefully younger, experienced in nonprofit management, and more energetic than this "old cob." The Board is actively searching for such a person to shift TTSS into another gear. Thanks for all of your passion for Trumpeters, wetlands, and wild places and critters. Keep 'em flying!

- John Cornely



From the President of the Board

On behalf of our Board and myself, I want to thank John Cornely for all his hard work and devotion to Trumpeter Swans while he served as our Executive Director over the past 7 years. John has achieved much during his term. He has been instrumental in improving our relations with Flyway Councils, building a more diverse Board, updating our policies, By-laws and Articles of Incorporation, growing our funding and membership, as well as increasing the public's awareness of TTSS through internet media. Although we will miss having John as an employee, he will remain our friend, a member and partner, and will volunteer to help further our goals. We welcome his continued support to the Society. Thanks so much, John!

- Gary Ivey

THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY 23RD CONFERENCE 5TH INTERNATIONAL SWAN SYMPOSIUM

FEBRUARY 3-6, 2014

EASTON, MARYLAND, USA

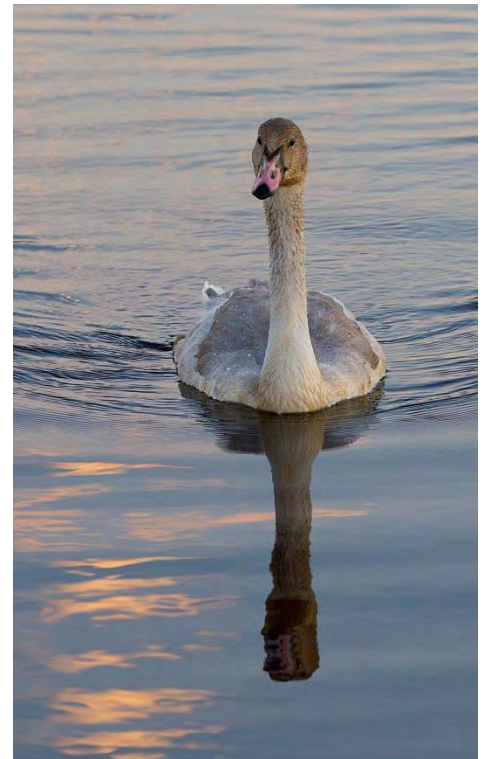


Banner Photo by Jess Lee

KEEP THE FLOCK GROWING!

2014 will be an exciting and challenging year for TTSS. A new Executive Director will be hired, and board and staff will begin work on a new strategic plan. Through this transition, we want to position ourselves to be a stronger voice for Trumpeter Swans and the habitats upon which they depend. To do this, we need more members, secure funding, and broader outreach. As you make your year-end giving plans, please consider the following ways that you can support our work.

- *Give a gift membership for double the conservation value.* You can help us increase the flock and double the value of your contribution at the same time! A generous board member has offered a membership challenge and will match dollar for dollar all new member donations to TTSS.
- *Make an extra year-end donation to TTSS.* Many people focus their charitable giving toward the end of the year. Please consider TTSS as you plan your year-end giving. We depend on our member support and no gift is too small! TTSS can also accept gifts of stock.
- *Show your support by "liking" TTSS on Facebook.* The Trumpeter Swan Society's Facebook page is an active forum for discussion of Trumpeter Swan conservation, beautiful photos, and breaking news. You can stay informed about continentwide Trumpeter Swan issues by frequenting our Facebook page and can introduce your friends to this magnificent species by encouraging them to "like" us as well.



Trumpeter Cygnet, Mark Wetzel

To donate to TTSS, you may look for our year-end appeal donation envelope in your mailbox, visit our website <http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org/donate.html>, or contact babel@trumpeterswansociety.org.

TTSS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Since our last issue, people from 10 states and 1 province have joined our flock!

CANADA: Ontario: Sabrina Dennis –Mississauga; **USA: California:** Sue Wood – San Diego; **Idaho:** Patricia Healy – Lava Hot Springs, Eddie Shea – Victor; **Indiana:** Jeffrey Waggoner – Indianapolis; **Maine:** Keith and Meredith Morehouse – Casco; **Montana:** Ralna Cunningham – Billings; **New York:** Terry Powell – Wolcott; **Ohio:** Lynn McConnell – Quaker City; **Utah:** Terry Mair – Midway; **Washington:** Thomas Holmes – Sammamish, Al and Kate Werner – Seattle; **Washington, DC:** National Wildlife Refuge Association.

TTSS TO HOST TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY 23RD CONFERENCE AND 5TH INTERNATIONAL SWAN SYMPOSIUM



Photo: Donald Graham Slaughter

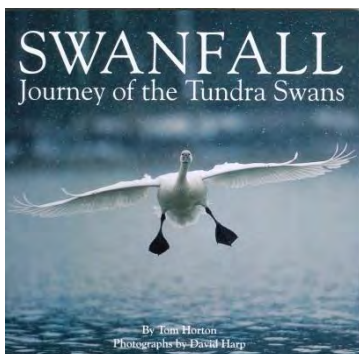
An outstanding program is shaping up for our upcoming 23rd Trumpeter Swan Society Conference, which will be held 3-6 February 2014 in Easton, Maryland. Registration for the conference is now open, and we encourage you to add your name to our list of participants.

We are particularly excited that our conference will be held in concert with the 5th International Swan Symposium this year. This means that we will have the opportunity to learn from researchers and managers working on other swan species from around the world, in addition to hearing talks on current Trumpeter Swan management and conservation.

Highlights from the conference will include: oral presentations on all eight swan species and speakers from at least 18 countries; a poster session; special workshops, including one on power line collision issues; a silent auction and banquet presentation; a field trip to view Tundra Swans and visit Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge; opportunities to network with the world's leading swan and waterfowl researchers; and much more.

Our local planning committee has been working hard to ensure that conference participants will have a chance to experience and explore the Eastern Shore of Maryland. We will dine on oysters and crab, view thousands of wintering Tundra Swans, and stay in an historic Maryland town. Information about the conference program, how to register, logistical information, and more can be found at: www.trumpeterswansociety.org/2014-conference.html.

Early-bird registration rates apply through 10 January 2014, but we encourage you to register and book your travel and rooms early. Our special discounted room block rate at the Tidewater Inn is in effect through 17 January 2014. See you in Easton! *Note: if you prefer that the registration form be mailed, please call our office at 763.694.7851 or contact Becky Abel at babel@trumpeterswansociety.org.*



BANQUET PRESENTATION by Tom Horton and David Harp: *SWANFALL: JOURNEY OF THE TUNDRA SWANS*

Our conference banquet speakers will be Tom Horton, well-known environmental reporter for *The Baltimore Sun* and author of several books on the Chesapeake Bay, and photographer David Harp. Their presentation chronicles the seasonal journey of Tundra Swans across North America, culminating in their return to the ancestral wintering grounds on the Chesapeake Bay. Their narrative and dramatic images will emphasize the riches of mid-bay fields,

marshes, and rivers that sustain the swans over winter until spring's growing daylight once again triggers their northward migration.

IOWA TRUMPETER SWAN RESTORATION UPDATE

by Dave Hoffman, Iowa Department of Natural Resources



In 2013, at least 45 Trumpeter Swan nest attempts occurred in Iowa, slightly down from 49 nests in 2012 and 51 in 2011.

Figure 1 – right: Iowa Trumpeter Swan nest attempts, 1998-2001.

Since 1998, Trumpeter Swan nests have occurred in 25 of Iowa's 99 counties, totaling 391. The 2013 spring flash flooding resulted in the loss of at least nine swan nests, 20 percent of the total 45 nest attempts.

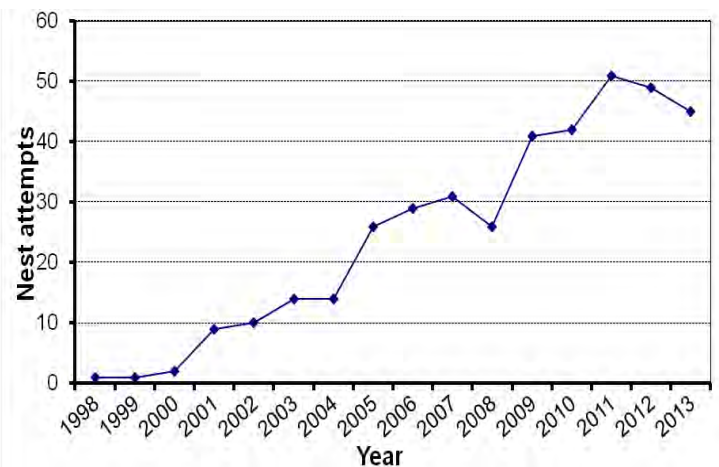
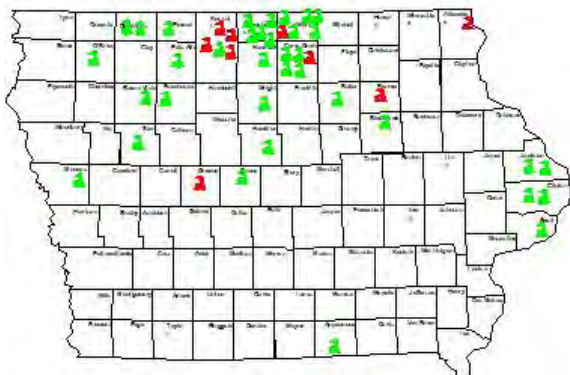


Figure 2—left: Iowa wild Trumpeter Swan nest attempts in 2013. Green = successful, Red = unsuccessful.



Late summer dry weather and dry wetland conditions in 2012 and 2013 resulted in higher cygnet mortality, increased cases of lead poisoning, and decreased swan production. Many wetlands went completely dry in late August and cygnets were forced to walk overland long distances in search of food

and water. Losing swan nests and cygnets due to flooding and drought in the same year is concerning. This stresses the importance of protecting our remaining wetlands, which function as Mother Nature's sponges by absorbing and reducing flash flooding events and holding water later into the dry summers.

An estimated 78 cygnets fledged in 2013. The release of 20 swans in 2012 and 2013 brings the total released to 1,132. The January midwinter waterfowl survey tallied a record number of 747 Trumpeter Swans in Iowa. Our Trumpeter Swan observations database includes over 4,000 reports to date, with Iowa swans reported from 17 states as far west as Colorado and as far east as Virginia. Iowa swans have also been seen in two Canadian provinces

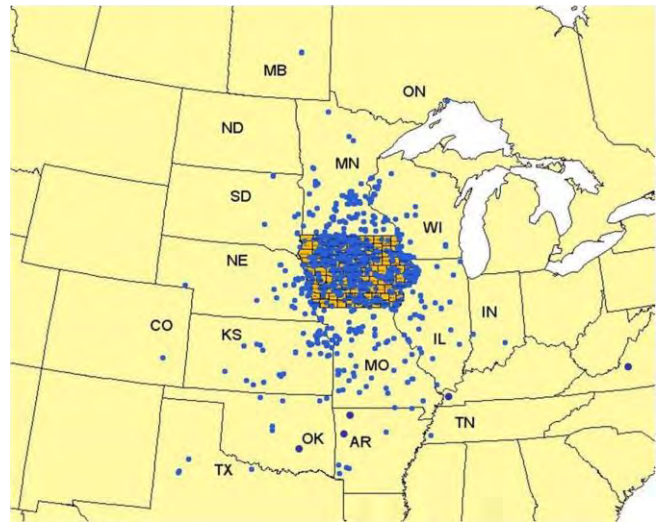


Figure 3— above: Observation reports of Iowa-banded Trumpeter Swans, 1995-2013.

Thirty-three partnership breeding and holding sites are currently active out of a peak 121. Iowa County Conservation Boards, naturalists, and swan volunteers continue with restoration activities, swan releases, and promotion of wetland values. With this cooperative effort, 20 swans were released in 2013.

The success of the Iowa Trumpeter Swan restoration program is amazing. From the period of 1884-1997, there were no nesting pairs in the state. Over the spring and summer of 2013, there were 45 nesting pairs— this is truly outstanding! All of the partners take great pride in this accomplishment.



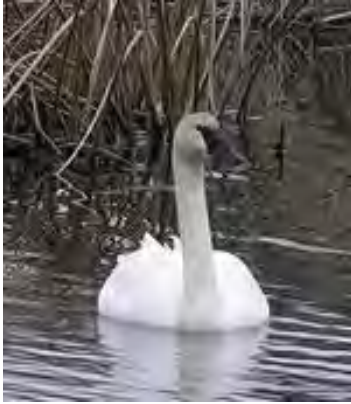
Because Trumpeter Swans are nearing sustainable numbers in north central and east central Iowa, the Iowa DNR has been able to reduce hands-on efforts. Instead, more effort is focused on wetlands, water quality, and restoring additional habitat. We will continue monitoring, surveying,

banding, recording observations, and providing outreach and technical assistance to make certain that these gorgeous birds will remain in Iowa for future generations.

Photos and graphics by Dave Hoffman

SOLO'S LEGACY ENDURES AT TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

by Mike Rule, Turnbull NWR



Following a 21-year hiatus, the last remaining member of the Turnbull NWR Trumpeter Swan restoration flock, dubbed Solo by the local press, found a new mate and successfully fledged four cygnets in 2009, three of



which survived through their first winter. As improbable as that event was for our male swan, estimated to be at least 33 years old, he sired five more cygnets in 2010, all of which fledged. Although he returned to the refuge following a thaw in January 2011 with his mate, three offspring from 2009, and five from 2010, he was

found on the ice of a local lake shortly afterwards, ill and unable to fly. He was brought to the Washington State University Veterinary School where he succumbed to complications of lead poisoning. The lakes south of the refuge where the swans have been observed after refuge freeze up are heavily fished with resultant lead sinkers being available to bottom-feeding swans.

The loss of Solo was not, however, the end of the story. His mate formed a new pair bond with an unmarked swan in early 2012, nested, and successfully fledged three cygnets. Throughout this time period, the number of Trumpeters observed on refuge wetlands in fall before freeze up and shortly after a late winter thaw has increased to as many as 16 birds. By basic accounting, we believe they are mostly swans hatched and fledged on Turnbull since 2009. We have been observing a number of Trumpeter Swans in the spring on and near the refuge that were not part of Turnbull's flock. This trend in greater Trumpeter Swan numbers



has been observed over the past few years and appears to coincide with observed increases in their populations in North America. This year, two pairs were observed in late April near refuge headquarters, where recent nesting has occurred. One pair nested at Middle Pine Lake in the same location as last year and includes Solo's mate. The Cheever Lake pair is believed to include one of Solo's 2009 cygnets and a swan of unknown origin that passed through the area in early spring. The Cheever Lake pair produced three cygnets, which all survived to fledging, and the Middle Pine Lake pair produced four cygnets, two of which survived to fledging.

Efforts to establish a flock from Red Rock Lakes NWR transplants in the late 1960s were considered a failure, but it seems that life has found a way. Although swan management at Turnbull since 1988 can be described as a program of benign neglect, a more active approach may be needed if we are to see full occupancy of Turnbull's very suitable swan breeding habitat. As a first step, we need to determine the genetic provenance of this small population, their familial relationships, and their winter movements. Marking of individual birds and blood sampling will take place in late summer of 2014.

Visit the refuge website (<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Turnbull/about.html>) to read more about this 18,217-acre refuge and its unique ecosystem of the Channeled Scablands.

All Photos courtesy of USFWS: Solo, Turnbull NWR, Solo's Next Generation.

COORDINATING TRUMPETER SWAN AND GRAYLING CONSERVATION IN MONTANA'S CENTENNIAL VALLEY

An Update from Ruth Shea



Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (RRLNWR) in Montana's Centennial Valley was established in 1935 to save the last Trumpeters of the lower 48 states. It

remains crucially important to Greater Yellowstone's Trumpeter Swans. The refuge also provides important habitat for Montana grayling, a fish that could soon be federally listed as threatened or endangered.

Last year, TTSS became concerned when grayling managers proposed actions that would negatively impact swans. Proposals included opening Upper Lake to public fishing, releasing nonnative trout in a swan nesting pond to increase fishing opportunity, and obliterating MacDonald Pond to improve spawning habitat. Our concern turned to alarm when we learned that some interagency fish managers had suggested dredging the refuge's Upper Lake to benefit grayling. Over the past year, TTSS has convinced the US Fish and Wildlife Service to reject some of these proposals and seek better options.

To help us interact more effectively with fish managers, we launched a project to better understand the history and causes of grayling decline in the valley. Our ultimate goal is to work with fish managers to design effective grayling conservation actions while minimizing negative impacts to swans. The importance of our project was highlighted this summer, when an unsubstantiated theory was widely spread by radio and internet that "*early conservationists*

made a grievous mistake while trying to save the trumpeter swan — they nearly wiped out Arctic grayling." www.npr.org/2013/07/11/200788221/saving-one-species-at-the-expense-of-another. The essence of this theory was that ponds constructed on the refuge to improve waterfowl habitat destroyed crucial grayling spawning. Most disturbing, the "need" to reverse this "damage" and to never again commit such "mistakes" was emphasized.

Over the past year, Jim Roscoe of High Divide Consulting, and I, as TTSS Greater Yellowstone Coordinator, have spent hundreds of hours researching the history of grayling decline in the Red Rock Lakes drainage. Our research, which included review of many publications from the 1890s to 1930s, documented that other factors, including construction of Lima Dam in 1910, decades of unscreened irrigation diversions, heavy stocking of nonnative fish, overfishing, physical changes in the valley waters due to drought and earthquake activity, and post-glacial climate change, caused the decline of this isolated glacial-relict fish population. Our research also found that the construction of MacDonald Pond, which some claimed was to blame for destroying the once-massive spawning run in Elk Creek, was built years after the run had been extirpated.

TTSS will submit the results of this research to the US Fish and Wildlife Service this winter as part of the formal Endangered Species Status Review process. We are hopeful that this historical record will clarify important aspects of the grayling decline and will help fish and swan managers work together to develop a showcase program that will benefit both vulnerable species.

Photo: Jess Lee, www.jessleephotos.com



UPCOMING HOLIDAYS: THINK TTSS FOR YOUR SHOPPING!

*The holidays are right around the corner, 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 Swan 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 family! Memberships are not expensive and well over 90 percent of every membership dollar goes directly to swan conservation work.

THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY



Assuring the Vitality and Welfare of Wild Trumpeter Swans

Photo: Richard Sonnen



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