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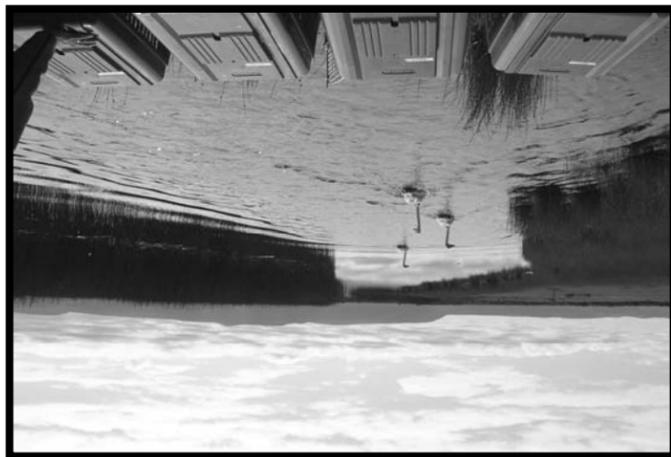


*Photo: by Bob Martinka – Citizens Release Swans at Ovando*

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*Trumpeter Restoration Efforts Begin Anew in Oregon....  
Photo by Martin J. St. Louis, Summer Lakes WA*



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

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**TRUMPETINGS**

*Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society*

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

Vol. X1X No. 2

July 2009

**From the Executive Director**

Summer is here again and cygnets are learning the routine of becoming members of their own Trumpeter Swan society! In this issue of *Trumpetings* are some Milestones of great interest to all of us. Although we won't have the big picture until some time after the next range-wide survey is conducted in 2010, observations of Trumpeters have been coming in from different locations throughout the annual cycle. Nests are hatching in areas that have not seen cygnets for decades! On the negative side, Trumpeters continue to die unnecessarily at the hands of people, either directly (as with the vandalistic shooting of a pair attending their nest in Idaho) or indirectly from lead poisoning or collisions with powerlines. With only about 75 nesting pairs of Trumpeters in the western US (excluding Alaska); we are concerned about the loss of every pair in the Rocky Mountain Population. This concern has led TTSS to launch a new effort, the *Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Initiative* (GYTSI) – full story to follow.

**Of Concern - Fundraising, Outreach and the Economy**  
The **economy** continues to impact virtually everyone. Fundraising, never easy, is very difficult these days. Thankfully, TTSS has sufficient funds to close out 2009, but our level of operations has been reduced to compensate. The level of operations in 2010 will depend on our success in fund raising during the last half of this year. The good news is that membership is growing at a likely record pace. The bad news is that memberships and Annual Campaign efforts do not raise sufficient funds to keep us going at a level that allows us to meet demands and expectations for the TTSS. We need to secure a wider base of significant individual donors and more foundation support. We are actively pursuing this and appreciate any leads you may have – new sources of support are welcomed! Part of the solution is to continue to enhance our outreach. Most North Americans have never heard of The Trumpeter Swan Society and are unaware of the wonderful conservation story of Trumpeters. The more people know about Trumpeters and TTSS, the more assistance for swan conservation can be generated. With that in mind we have greatly enhanced our **Website** [www.trumpeterswansociety.org](http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org) and launched a **TTSS Blog** <http://trumpeterswansociety.wordpress.com> and **E-news** (free upon request). Go the web site and check them out. Then, tell all your friends!

I hope everyone is having an enjoyable summer. As always, we need your help to keep the Trumpeters flying and to protect and restore their habitat. While you are traveling around, go observe and enjoy some Trumpeter families on a State Management Area, National Wildlife Refuge, Waterfowl Production Area or your neighbor's farm pond.

- John Cornely

**TTSS Works to Enhance Trumpeter Swan Conservation in Oregon**

After a near-decade hiatus, TTSS is pleased to announce that Trumpeter Swan releases have resumed in Oregon. Summer Lake Wildlife Area manager Marty St. Louis' photo of four swans swimming away from their boxes (*Cover, Trumpetings Vol.XIX No. 2*) records the resumption of Oregon's Trumpeter Swan Enhancement Program that had been suspended. TTSS, in partnership with Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Malheur NWR, the Wyoming Wetland Society and others, hopes the number of nesting Trumpeters will increase in wetlands east of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon and Washington. The release at Summer Lakes WA is strategic to help swans learn to winter in south-central Oregon. To achieve this goal, four yearling Trumpeter Swans raised by the Wyoming Wetland Society were released by ODFW staff on June 20, 2009, in Rest Lake on Summer Lake Wildlife Area in south-central Oregon. A number of swans were released there in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Two family groups were observed there this past winter.

A long history of Trumpeter Swan releases in Oregon began back in the late 1930's, when the Trumpeters from Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Montana were transported to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon. While winter waterfowl habitat is limited at Malheur NWR, Summer Lake WA and surrounding areas have open water and adequate aquatic vegetation during the winter for Trumpeters.

*This program is not without costs. A grant from the Felburn Foundation funded this initial release and TTSS will be raising funds to continue the program. If you are interested in "adopting" an Oregon Swan or contributing to this project please contact us! - John Cornely & Gary Ivey*

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## INTERIOR POPULATION NEWS

### Cause for Celebration

- Ron Andrews, TTSS Board Member  
And Iowa Trumpeter Restoration Coordinator

In 2009, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources reached a record high of 33 trumpeter swan nest attempts in the wild. The initial goal of the DNR was to establish 15 nesting pairs of wild Trumpeter Swans. These nesting numbers may seem small when compared to Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. When one considers that over 95% of Iowa's original 2 ½ million glaciated acres of wetlands have been drained and converted to cropland, Iowans have cause for celebration. The return of these charismatic mega-fauna to the skies and wetlands is promising. Unless something catastrophic occurs, I am optimistic to believe that in my lifetime there will be upwards of 100 nesting pairs of Trumpeter Swans in the state. Every nest attempt is exciting in Iowa but one nesting effort especially rings a significant bell this year. A pair of Trumpeter Swans nested and hatched 6 cygnets on a restored wetland on an Iowa State University experimental agronomy farm, "trumpeting" many reasons why agricultural interests can work closely with conservation. Both parties help the environment by restoring wetlands while still raising record amounts of corn and beans.

### A Brief IOWA TO ARKANSAS EXPERIMENTAL POPULATION Update

The second batch of Iowa Trumpeter Swans was released on the Holla Bend NWR and the Buffalo National River in Arkansas in February 2009. It is hoped that these free flying trumpeters will return to Iowa and over the years establish a secure migrational connecting link between the states. These cygnets had gained free flight in Iowa to supposedly get their compass readings in the Hawkeye State. They were delivered to Arkansas and allowed immediate free flight. They were collared with individually identifying green neck-collars. Thus far we are only aware of one trumpeter that has returned to Iowa and that was last summer. We encourage the public to notify the Trumpeter Swan Society, or the Iowa DNR if they spy one of these green-collared trumpeters. The project is scheduled for one more year and we are still debating as to whether we should modify the effort and perhaps take some entire swan families, adults with cygnets, to Arkansas. The Holla Bend NWR has seen a very gradual increase in wintering swans in their area. Arkansawyers are as excited as anyone when they see these magnificent big white birds in their state. Evaluation and potential modifications of the experiment are continuing.

### Missouri Hunters lose Hunting Privileges for Shooting Trumpeters

Last year 7 hunters were arrested in Missouri for killing Trumpeter Swans. Five of those cases have been resolved and the other two are still pending. Due to a

recommendation from a staff biologist of the Missouri Department of Conservation, each of the five hunters was required to pay \$750.00 restitution to TTSS. In addition, each had hunting privileges suspended for one year. TTSS is not against hunting. Hunters and anglers started the conservation movement in the US before the Civil War and continue to contribute a great deal to natural resource conservation today. However, sportsmen and sportswomen should be experts at identifying the game birds they hunt. *Reported by John Cornely*



The Interior Population spans three eastern administrative flyways. - Graphic by Howard Topoff

### Report from Wisconsin - Sumner Matteson, July 17

"To date (still counting and tracking), we have a record high number of Trumpeter nesting pairs in Wisconsin: 172 (compares with 128 in 2008)".

TTSS Board member Sumner Matteson is an avian ecologist working with the Wisconsin DNR. This summer's nest tally far surpasses the state's initial recovery goal of 20 pairs of nesting Trumpeters. In January of 2009, the Wisconsin DNR Natural Resources Board voted to remove the Trumpeter Swan, along with the Osprey, from the state Endangered and Threatened Species List. Diligent efforts led to this day. Beginning in 1989, Matteson (recently recognized by the Wisconsin Conservation Congress for his dedication to Trumpeter recovery) was one of the biologists who flew to Alaska to collect wild Trumpeter Swan eggs. At least two viable eggs were left in each nest and the remainder of the clutch was collected. Cygnets hatched out at the Milwaukee County Zoo over a 9-year period were placed into two programs: captive-rearing (birds held at captive sites until age 23 months and released at selected sites) and decoy-rearing (birds imprinted on a life-size decoy and allowed to fly free at fledging). A history of the project is available on a video entitled *Trumpeter Swans – for Generations to Come*. Order through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at <http://dnr.wi.gov/> (888) 936-7463.

► [www.trumpeterswansociety.org](http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org) ◀

## Citizen Science: GREATER YELLOWSTONE

The first project of TTSS's CITIZEN SCIENCE effort was completed this June by volunteer Mike Schwitters, from Choteau, MT. Mike retired after a 22-year career as a Weather Officer in the U.S. Air Force, where we suspect he refined his meticulous data recording skills. In retirement, Mike has launched a second "career", embarking on volunteer activities with private, state, provincial and federal wildlife agencies doing biological studies of wildlife, particularly waterfowl. Previously, he had assisted TTSS with monitoring swan movements in problem winter lead poisoning areas in western Washington. This summer, Mike assisted Ruth Shea in efforts to monitor swan nesting in Idaho. He spent a week checking swan nesting territories in the Island Park area to document hatching success and the brood size at hatch. He timed his efforts perfectly to coincide with hatching and gathered data on every nest that physically could be reached on the ground. Ruth was then able to check the more remote nests by aerial survey and could save a great deal of expense by not needing to fly the nests that Mike had previously checked. We are most grateful for Mike's help and look forward to working with future Citizen Science volunteers. Check out the Citizen Science section on our website for more details. Mike's work supports our Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Initiative (GYTSI), again check our website for full details.

### ► TTSS on FACEBOOK! ◀

The Trumpeter Swan Society has joined Facebook to help get the word out about the good work we do. If you are a Facebook member, please become a fan of TTSS. If you are not a member, consider joining – it's a very simple (and FREE!) process. Once a member, you can find our page using the search option and then just click on the Become a Fan button. Please share our page with your Facebook friends and encourage them to become Fans and members also.

Coordinated by Gary Ivy, TTSS Board Vice-President

### ► WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ◀ From 21 States & 1 Province

**AZ:** Paul Irvine, Philip & Ellen Leavitt, Howard Topoff  
**CA:** Phyllis Browning, Laura Cockrell, D-Ann Brock, Betty Ann & Frank Williams  
**CO:** Erin Garcia  
**CT:** Mahlon and Mary Jean Hale, Turhan Tirana  
**DE:** Mark Wetzel  
**IA:** Gary D. Tonhouse  
**MA:** Elisabeth Garland, Rosemary Putnam, Elaine Basbanes  
**MD:** Lynn Feryus  
**MI:** Eleanor Abbott, Frederick B. Bevis, Judy and James Geary, Alicia Roberts  
**MO:** Linda C. Tossing  
**MT:** Claire Gower, Laure Lyman, Robert Martinka, John and Gail Richardson, Alan & Colene Sachanowski, Bill and Karen West  
**NC:** Mike Dunn  
**ND:** Ronald Reynolds  
**NE:** Julie Schroeder  
**NV:** Charles L. Clark & Phyllis Gertis  
**PA:** Judith LaValley  
**TX:** Carol E. Edwards  
**UT:** Cindy Lund  
**VA:** Jim Curtis  
**WA:** Don and Jan Allen, Gerald Plowman, Loren Webster  
**WY:** Marcyes Schmaus  
**Ontario:** Tony Beck

## WELCOME NEW BUSINESS MEMBERS

Alpine Motel, *Cooke City, MT*  
Banner Printing, *Sierra Vista, AZ*  
Wildlife Along the Rockies, *Cooke City, MT*  
Zango Creative, Inc, *Seattle, WA*

## Heartfelt THANKS to our Volunteers!

**Field Work:** Mike Schwitters of Choteau, MT. Help with Trumpeter Swan nesting surveys in Greater Yellowstone.

### Website Design & Updates:

Michelle Drewien, Zango Creative, Inc.  
([www.zangocreative.com](http://www.zangocreative.com))

### Linking TTSS w/ Birders & Conservation Groups:

Dwayne and Marj Longenbaugh – Albuquerque, NM  
Help with field trips for Ruth Shea, representing TTSS at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition meeting, June 2009

### Linking TTSS w/ Photographers:

Greg Smith, Morro Bay, CA Research and coordination of ♦ PHOTO-OF-THE-MONTH ♦ featured on <http://trumpeterswansociety.wordpress.com>

### Use of Photographs: Website, Blog & Brochures:

Ron Andrews, IA: (TTSS Board Member), Tony Beck, Ontario (<http://tonybeck.ca/>), Bonnie Block, WA, J. Buchanen, WA, Morrie Carter, WA, Duke Conrood, WA, Tempe Deviche, Ron Dexter, WA, Mike Dunn, NC, Lynn Feryus, MD, A. Frederickson, MN, Mary Gray Dan and Cindy Hartman, MT: (<http://wildlifealongtherockies.homestead.com/>), Dennis Hayden, WA, Michael Hobbs, WA, Martha Jordan, WA, Michael Knutson, WA, Jess Lee, ID: ([www.jessleephotos.com](http://www.jessleephotos.com)), Steve Meladinow, WA, Dennis Paulson, WA, Gerald Plowman, WA: (<http://www.pbase.com/riccone>), Robert Martinka, MT: (<http://birdmanbob.blogspot.com/>), Cy Rob, WA, Alan Sachanowski, MT, Gary D. Tonhouse, IA: ([www.reflectiveimages.com](http://www.reflectiveimages.com)), John Turner, WY (former TTSS Board), Lowell Washburn, IA of Iowa DNR (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/iowadnr/>), Dave Weaver, MA (former TTSS Board), Loren Webster, WA ([http://lorenwebster.net/In\\_a\\_Dark\\_Time/](http://lorenwebster.net/In_a_Dark_Time/)), Mark Wetzel, DE, Art Wolfe, WA: ([www.artwolfe.com](http://www.artwolfe.com))

### Educational Materials Production:

**Flyways Maps:** - Howard Topoff – Portal, AZ  
**State Fact Sheets:** - Marcia Emmons – Iowa City, IA  
**Brochure Review:** - Bud & Gingy Ferguson – CA  
**Video Productions–YouTube:** - Savoera Pahladsingh, who draws attention to Trumpeter Swans on YouTube! Save the Trumpeter Swan & Trumpeter Swan Eden: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQPnBMMs7Zg> & <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXmj4vx7a94>

► Please note: If we have overlooked anyone, please draw this to our attention! We're often looking forward to the next task and thanking volunteers for their efforts is most important to recognizing our joint accomplishments as we move forward together. ◀

## MILESTONES:

### TTSS COMPLETES WEB REVISION!



[www.trumpeterswansociety.org](http://www.trumpeterswansociety.org)

- Photo by Alan Sachanowski, MT

Many thanks go to talented web designer Michelle Drewein of Zango Creative, Inc. of Seattle who graciously contributed time to develop and improve our website. Many thanks also go to our staff and Board members for providing the factual material from their regions and projects, researching links, and sharing their knowledge of Trumpeter Swans and passion for secure restoration. Twenty-one photographers contributed images that make this an exciting site.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpeter Swan Nest for Appanoose Co. Wetlands, Iowa in more than a Century!

Trumpeter Swan cygnets hatched over a two-day period starting June 12<sup>th</sup> - lacking any knowledge of their historical significance in south-central Iowa where their nest was the 1<sup>st</sup> recovery in century. Nearly 1,000 Trumpeter Swans have been released in Iowa since the state's restoration program began in 1993. According to coordinator Dave Hoffman of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, in the 10 years following success of the first restoration flock nest (1998 from Dubuque County) at least 500 cygnets have hatched in Iowa. Three years ago Hoffman released young swans on private wetland habitat enhanced by Steve Archer and Richard Doll of Moulton, IA. This year Archer reported strong territorial behavior, "The swans kept everything else off the wetland - during nesting the male wouldn't let anything near that female." Appanoose County's first cygnets will have 1000+ acres of excellent private habitat to roam as they grow to explore riverine wetlands, lakes, ponds and marshes, open wooded regions and prairies. Next door they'll find another 8600 acres of public land at the Sedan Bottoms Wildlife Management Area and wetlands long the Chariton River Bottoms. More than 350 acres of the Archer/Doll land is enrolled in the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Archer says participation in

WRP has financially enabled him to restore his land. Both men are rightly proud of the habitat diversity they've created. The wetlands providing nest habitat for Trumpeters are also home to American White Pelicans, Great Blue Herons, Pileated Woodpeckers, River Otters, and Bald Eagles that nest every spring. Archer and Doll have hopes that Trumpeters will make wetlands of Appanoose their permanent home. Likely, the cob and pen swans busy feeding this year's cygnets would agree. TTSS works with private land owners using public programs to identify and develop appropriate Trumpeter Swan conservation projects. TTSS Board Member Ron Andrews has lead the effort to restore nesting Trumpeters in Iowa with significant assistance from TTSS member Dave Hoffman. - Adapted for TRUMPETINGS from data and story by Jason Johnson, USDA-NRCS

#### Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The WRP is a voluntary federal program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. The goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. A focus on Trumpeter Swan habitat restoration using the WRP program helps promote the water quality and flood control benefits that wetlands provide. Landowners can do a great deal of good for Trumpeters and other wildlife when they get involved with government programs, such as WRP and CRP. Two dedicated landowners in Appanoose County, IA found this to be true as they witnessed the first cygnets born in over a century. They sum up their accomplishment saying "If you build it, they will come" certainly rings true with wetlands and wildlife. "

### ONTARIO BREAKS 1000!

A team of vigilant observers has helped biologist and TTSS board member Harry Lumsden to track and tally what is now a successful, self-sustaining population of Trumpeter Swans in Ontario. This past year 116 birds were marked in Ontario — 70 of them caught by hand by the team of Bev and Ray Kingdon, Julie Kee and Kyna Intini in the wintering flock that feeds at La Salle Park and other areas near Burlington on the west end of Lake Ontario. Ontario observers have been asked to keep track of the proportion of marked-to-unmarked birds in groups observed (even if number is not read). Analysing the data, Harry Lumsden, TTSS Board Member, recorded quadruple figures for the report period of Sept. 2007 to Aug. 2008— a total of 1018 birds. Harry started Ontario's Trumpeter Swan Restoration program in 1982 when Trumpeters had not been seen for almost 100 years. Congratulations to all involved for passing this significant milestone! *Read the full story our BLOG <http://trumpeterswansociety.wordpress.com>*

## News from Minnesota

Preliminary reports appear to indicate that Trumpeter Swans are having a very successful nesting year in Minnesota. Reports of swan broods have come from both northern Minnesota as well as suburban Minneapolis. One pair was reported to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources by a birder on Rose Lake, Cook County, on the Canadian Minnesota border. Dee Kuder of Crane Lake, Minnesota, sent photos of a Trumpeter Swan family of three cygnets on Crane Lake, St. Louis County. Staff at Voyageurs National Park, also on the Canadian Minnesota border, observed three pairs of Trumpeters this summer. Northern Minnesota contains vast wilderness and thousands of wetlands, so many pairs very likely go undetected. In contrast, a number of pairs of swans have successfully nested once again in Hennepin County, just west of Minneapolis. For the first time, two of these pairs chose wetlands within housing subdivisions and each produced cygnets in close proximity to homes where the home owners were thrilled to have swans in the neighborhood. Another pair nested in a wetland adjacent to a shopping mall. Arnie Fredrickson, TTSS member and Three Rivers Park District volunteer, made two aerial surveys on June 12 and July 3 in three counties west of Minneapolis and commented that there appears to a "bumper crop" of swan cygnets this year with multiple sites having 7 and 8 cygnets. Arnie noted that water levels in general are very low (Minnesota is experiencing significant drought conditions this year) and that he has been observing many more flocks of American White Pelicans than in previous surveys. - Reported by Madeleine Linck

### Lindbergh Foundation Award Recognizes Work with Trumpeter Swans

Work with Trumpeter Swans inspired pilots Terry and Mary Kohler who recently received awards at a gala event at EAA AirVenture Museum in Oshkosh, WI. The Lindbergh Foundation recognized them saying "Terry and Mary Kohler's use of their aircraft to reintroduce swan and crane eggs in the United States is an excellent example of the Lindbergh Foundation's concept of balancing technology and nature". In 1989, The Kohlers responded to a request from the State of Alaska to help with a project between the Wisconsin DNR and the USFWS. Kohlers provided essential transport services to bring Trumpeter Swan eggs collected from wild nests in Alaska to incubation and rearing facilities in Wisconsin such as the Milwaukee Zoo. From a start with Trumpeters, Kohler went on to help with Whooping Cranes, Siberian Cranes, Humbolt Penguins, Piping Plovers and other species.

### PACIFIC COAST POPULATION NEWS: Recent Paper Published on Alaskan Trumpeters

A striking Trumpeter Swan photo fills the eye-catching front cover of the most recent issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management. TTSS Board member Jim King is one of the five authors of the Trumpeter Swan

article contained in the July 2009 issue (Vol. 73, Issue 5). The article, "Evidence of Alaskan Trumpeter Swan Population Growth Using Bayesian Hierarchical Methods" summarizes the results of recent Ph.D. studies by lead author Joshua Schmidt, University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Josh explored various statistical methods to analyze the data from the periodic Alaskan range wide surveys to address variation due to increasing survey effort over time, substantial intervals between surveys, and missing data. The paper also provides an excellent discussion of the changes in breeding range in Alaska, possible relationships to global warming, strengths and limitations of the survey design, and management implications.

### Rocky Mountain Population: RED ROCK LAKES NWR TRACKS TRUMPETER TRENDS

Eleven broods were observed during the June 30th 2009 aerial survey of Red Rock Lakes NWR and adjacent habitat in the Centennial Valley. Bill West, Refuge Manager, sends TTSS this report and summary statistics from refuge biologist Jeff Warren.

*Eight broods were recorded on the Refuge, two in the Centennial Valley, and one at Conklin Lake. Although mean brood size was small (= 2.0), apparent nesting success was 100% based on the 11 nests found during the May nest survey. There were 105 white birds and 22 cygnets counted during the survey. No active nests were observed during the survey. The number of cygnets observed was up 20 individuals from an historical low of 2 cygnets observed in 2008, but was still the second lowest number of cygnets produced during the last 5 years. However, the number of cygnets produced this year not differ significantly from the 5-year average of 25.4 (SE = 6.49). Wetland conditions were average to slightly above average for the spring. Similar to last year, production may have been impacted by the relatively late spring experienced. Upper and Lower Red Rock lakes had ice cover until the second week of May again this spring. June was cool and wet also - mean minimum temperature for the month was 39° F, and 4.1" of precipitation fell.*

#### Region RRLNWR

Year	Cygnets	Broods
2009	17	8
2008	0	0
2007	24	7
2006	20	5
2005	30	8
Sum of Cygnets, all Yrs: 91		Sum of Broods, all Yrs: 28
Mean Cygnet 18.2		Mean Brood Count: 5.6

#### Region Centennial Valley

Year	Cygnets	Broods
2009	5	3
2008	2	1
2007	13	4
2006	9	3
2005	7	2
Sum of Cygnets, all Yrs: 36		Sum of Broods, all Yrs: 13
Mean Cygnet 7.2		Mean Brood Count: 2.6

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN POPULATION NEWS

### TTSS Launches New GREATER YELLOWSTONE TRUMPETER SWAN INITIATIVE (GYTSI)

- Ruth Shea, TTSS Director-at-Large

Although Trumpeter Swans are increasing in several parts of their range, adults that nest in Greater Yellowstone have declined by 25% during the past 20 years. Currently there are less than 75 nesting pairs in the entire western US, excluding Alaska. Greater Yellowstone's Trumpeters are the only group in the US that escaped extinction by the early 1900s and that still persist in their historic breeding grounds today. Although there are a few small and widely scattered restoration flocks in the West, it will be difficult to avoid losing Trumpeters as a breeding species in the western US unless the Greater Yellowstone nesting swans can be securely restored.

In 2009, the federal and state waterfowl managers of the Pacific Flyway approved a revised management plan that set a minimum objective for Greater Yellowstone of at least 540 adults and 117 nesting pairs by 2013. In 2008, there were only 379 adults and 44 nesting pairs. Potential is good to securely rebuild this population if all the many federal and state waterfowl refuges in the region could achieve their potential for nesting swans. It will be particularly important to rebuild nesting at Red Rock Lakes NWR, Montana, which contains the best nesting wetlands in the entire region.

TTSS has launched a 5-year Initiative (GYTSI) to work through private/agency partnerships in a region wide effort to achieve at least the minimum approved objectives by 2013. GYTSI will strongly focus on helping all regional refuges to achieve their full potential for Trumpeter nesting and ensure that their management plans meet the long-term needs of Trumpeter Swans. We will also work with private landowners to establish nesting pairs where possible and will develop a strong Citizen Science program to use the skills and energy of volunteers when possible.

Our Executive Director, John Cornely, has many years of experience with management of National Wildlife Refuges for nesting Trumpeter Swans and will take a lead role in this program. TTSS Board member Ruth Shea, who has also worked with Greater Yellowstone Trumpeters for many years, will also be deeply involved in this effort.

### TTSS BOARD PRESIDENT DALE BECKER REPORTS FROM THE FLATHEAD

Twenty-four swans jumped from a white horse trailer on June 20<sup>th</sup> to find a new home at Pablo National Wildlife Refuge on the Flathead Reservation north of Missoula, Montana. Dale Becker, TTSS Board President, manages the Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program, one that has had considerable local support as biologists strive to find the right combination of genetic stock, habitat and viability. Becker points out that seclusion, stable water levels and ample, nutritious aquatic vegetation are needed for the

swans to succeed. Illegal shooting, collisions with power lines and lead poisoning are threats to survival. Just prior to release Becker reported to us:

*"Swan activity here on the Flathead Indian Reservation is brisk this spring. We documented several pairs of trumpeters during an April flight. Ground observations since then have documented at least four nesting attempts. We anticipate finding additional nests as soon as hatching occurs (within the next week or so). Our captive efforts here have yielded six cygnets so far, with two pairs still nesting as of May 27th. Public interest in the trumpeter swan reintroduction project remains high".*

Since 2001, 159 swans have been released in lands of the Flathead Valley. Nesting commenced in 2004 and since that time some 69 cygnets have been produced. Marked swans from the project wear red neck-collars with bold white lettering. Dale was named Biologist of the Year by the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 2004. He is a Certified Wildlife Biologist with a M.S. degree in wildlife from the University of Montana. Since 1989 he has served as the Wildlife Program Manager for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes.

### SWAN RELEASE DRAWS CROWD IN MONTANA

Eighty people were on hand to watch as USFWS biologist Greg Neudecker and local citizens released 11 young Trumpeter Swans at the private Foote Ranch near Ovando. Blogger Bob Martinka of Helena was on hand to capture some wonderful images and he shares his story on <http://BirdManBob.blogspot.com> in the posting of June 22. Here you'll find an image of a group walking out to the edge of a postcard-perfect pond through lush greenery towards a shimmering reflection of mountains and the pond's rim of trees. The swans wear red neck-collars with bold white letters and a few are outfitted with the latest GPS satellite technology – an advance that should allow Neudecker and members of the Blackfoot Challenge to find out where the swans fly in winter to feed. Several of the swans being released were financially supported by Helena's Last Chance Audubon Society. Observers are seeing bonding behaviors in several pair of the 83 swans released over the past few years as part of Blackfoot Challenge. With luck, 2010 should be a banner year for nesting!

In July of 1806, Meriwether Lewis describes two swans flying over the Blackfoot Valley. Mortality from market hunting eventually caused their demise, but in 2005, when wild swans once again returned, a coalition of interested parties began a restoration program. The Blackfoot Valley has over 30,000 acres of wetlands at a suitable depth for feeding and – in contrast with other mountain valleys – good lower elevation habitat for the long nesting season. To learn more about the Blackfoot Challenge coalition, go to [www.blackfootchallenge.org](http://www.blackfootchallenge.org). Their motto is to work through Cooperation – Trust – Consensus. For Trumpeter Swans, it's a recipe for success in Montana!

### A Geriatric Swan Becomes an Ambassador

Over Father's Day weekend, dozens of newspapers and several science-oriented Blogs ran features on 'Solo', a Trumpeter Swan that sired a surprise clutch of four healthy cygnets in time to mark the holiday. Notable was his age (33+) and the gap in time since he had last preformed fatherly duties (21 years).

Michael Rule, wildlife biologist at Turnbull NWR (25 miles southwest of Spokane, WA.) filed this report of events with TTSS Executive Director, John Cornely.\*

*Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge was one of the original reintroduction sites for Trumpeter Swans from Red Rock Lakes NWR in the 1960's. From the initial introduction of 33 cygnets over 3 years: 1963, 1965, and 1966, the refuge flock remained relatively stable through 1976 with 27 to 29 birds recorded each spring. Nesting peaked with 8 nests in 1970, the time when all introduced birds had reached breeding age. In 1975, a high of 14 cygnets fledged. Jim Reese, refuge biologist at the time, believes that all breeding that occurred was accomplished by the original introduced cygnets and that none of the swans hatched on the refuge subsequently returned to breed.*

*In the mid-1970's the refuge discontinued supplemental feeding and the maintenance of open water in winter by aeration to encourage migration of the flock to higher quality winter range. The flock failed to migrate and fell into decline. By 1980, Turnbull's population was down to one active breeding pair. The female was predated by a coyote in 1988, reducing numbers to a single adult male, subsequently dubbed as 'Solo'. This male had been captured and banded in 1984 when he was at least 4 years old. Because he was believed to be part of a breeding pair that used the same wetland since 1980 (swans do not breed until they are on average 4 years old), refined estimates say that he is at least 33 years old.*

*In 1992, an unmarked adult trumpeter swan was seen with the male throughout the nesting season. Both the banded male and the new swan, a female at least 3 years old, were captured in 1993 and marked with neck collars. She remained with the male for 2 years and they built a nest platform but laid no eggs. The female disappeared in 1994. On occasion 1 to 2 unmarked Trumpeters and an occasional family group came to the refuge and stayed with Solo for up to 2 months, but invariably they left.*

*Solo remains on the refuge as long as there is open water. His location during freeze up is unknown, but it is likely close, since he returns almost within the day of a thaw. Local birders have noted a marked swan on a few occasions at the mouth of the Little Spokane River, approximately 20 miles as the swan flies.*

*This year Solo returned February 27. Though his collar is gone, biologists identified the male by a suite of recognizable behaviors such the route of his patrol and his complete intolerance of Canada Geese on the nesting pond. Three weeks later, he was joined by another swan.*

*They were constant companions this spring and after May 20, the pair was seen only in close proximity to a probable nest. Caution was used in observation as this was the first nest on the refuge in 21 years. On June 22, observers got a glimpse of a cygnet and then 3 more. The pair has been seen on several occasions since and the 4 cygnets appear to be doing well.*

Solo's notoriety with the public draws attention to Trumpeters Swans and we salute him for his outreach efforts! Will his breeding efforts be successful? If the female and cygnets stay with Solo this winter, there might not be enough quality winter habitats. Locally, hazards abound. Biologist Michael Rule notes that in the long-term it would be nice to establish movement between Eastern Washington and good wintering habitat. We at TTSS work diligently with public land managers to secure such connectivity. We'll keep you posted!

*\*Report from Michael Rule, Turnbull NWR. Adapted for publication in TRUMPETINGS by Editor Peg Abbott*



*Drawing by Narca Moore-Craig*

### Refuge Profile: TURNBULL NWR, WA

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is located approximately 25 miles southwest of the city of Spokane on the eastern edge of the Columbia Basin in northeastern Washington. The refuge protects 15,628 acres of an area referred to as the Channeled Scablands. The Channeled Scablands were formed approximately 15,000 years ago by a series of ice age floods originating from ancient Lake Missoula in northwestern Montana that scoured out large flood channels in the basalt and loess formations of the Columbia Plateau. Within these large flood tracts, numerous channels and pothole depressions were formed that later became a diverse complex of lakes, deep water marshes and ponds. The surrounding uplands are a mosaic of ponderosa pine forest, perennial grasslands and aspen/deciduous shrub habitats. Turnbull NWR, with over 1,700 acres of semi-permanent and permanent wetlands, appears to have suitable habitat for several trumpeter swan breeding pairs. Twenty-two large sloughs contain extensive aquatic beds of sago and flat-stem pondweed, horned pond weed, coontail and other species surrounded by emergent plant beds of hardstem bulrush and common cattail. More than 200 species of birds have been recorded in the area. Find this text and more about Turnbull NWR at [www.fws.gov/turnbull/](http://www.fws.gov/turnbull/) - USFWS

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