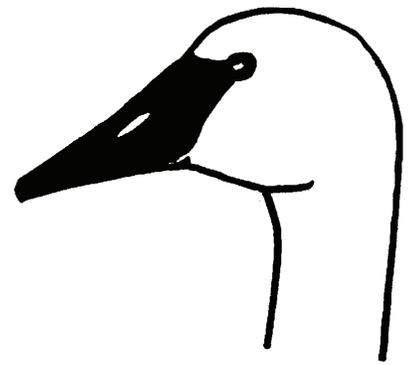




TRUMPETINGS

Voice of The Trumpeter Swan Society
12615 County Road 9 – Suite 100
Plymouth, Minnesota 55441
763-694-7851; ttss@threeriversparkdistrict.org
www.trumpeterswansociety.org.



Vol. XVI. No. 1

March 2006

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

Please be sure to note our new mailing address! Our main office is still housed within the Three Rivers Park District, but in February we moved from Baker Park Reserve over to French Regional Park, in the western metro of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Our telephone number and e-mail address remain the same. If you are visiting the Twin Cities area, we would welcome the chance to meet you and show you nearby areas where Trumpeter Swans can be observed on nesting territories during spring and summer as well as wintering sites, November through February.

It has been a busy winter for TTSS, with our efforts focused on trying to help halt the die-off from lead poisoning in the Pacific Northwest. Our deepest thanks to all the volunteers who endured great physical and emotional stress to help with the carcass pickup and radio telemetry this winter.

We were greatly heartened by the large increases in most populations that were documented by the 2005 range-wide survey. We can only hope that the restoration efforts of the past 75 years have built up Trumpeter numbers and distributions sufficiently to help the species survive major threats, such as the almost certain arrival of avian flu. As we all journey into these uncertain times, be proud that you have taken part in making Trumpeter Swans more secure.

Ruth Shea

TRUMPETER SWAN POPULATION STATUS 2005 -

Every 5 years, swan managers in the U.S. and Canada conduct a range-wide survey of Trumpeter Swans. The final report, compiled by Tim Moser, USFWS, Denver, will be available by late April. All populations, except for those nesting in the Rocky Mountains - U.S., showed substantial increases since the previous survey in 2000, as shown in the table of preliminary estimates below.

Population	2005	2000
Pacific Coast	24,929	17,551
Rocky Mt. - Canada	4,718	3,184
Rocky Mt. - US	510	482
Interior	4,647	2,430
North American Total	34,804	23,647

TRUMPETER GENETICS RESEARCH - Research to assess the genetic characteristics and relationships of the various groups of Trumpeter Swans in North America has recently been completed by scientists at the University of Denver and the U.S. Geological Survey, Fort Collins, Colorado. The study was funded by the USFWS. TTSS helped collect many of the Yukon and northern British Columbian samples for this study and helped arrange sampling from other areas. The results should help swan managers make better decisions when deciding which stocks of swans to use in various restoration programs. Copies of the final report will soon be available from Sara Oyler-McCance, Rocky Mountain Center for Conservation Genetics and Systematics, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208 or Soyler@du.edu.

PACIFIC COAST POPULATION NEWS

Washington State Lead Poisoning Response – This past winter, TTSS Board member Martha Jordan coordinated radio telemetry and sick and dead swan pickup efforts as Alaskan Trumpeter Swans returned to their wintering areas in northern Washington and neighboring southern British Columbia, to once again face the threat of lead poisoning. Contract funding from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and private donations, coupled with hundreds of donated volunteer hours, made all this very labor intensive work possible. A special thank you to Rodney Vandersypen and all the members of the Washington Waterfowl Association Whatcom Chapter who participated in the swan pick-up efforts.

Mike Smith, from the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Washington, focused on core sampling suspect areas to assess lead shot densities. Staff from the WDFW, Canadian Wildlife Service, and USFWS conducted aerial surveys to monitor swan distribution and abundance, aided all the data-gathering efforts, and provided key logistical support. Facing a crisis that transcends an international border and federal/state jurisdictions, a dedicated team has evolved to tackle this difficult problem.

TTSS volunteer Mike Schwitters from Montana led the telemetry crew of volunteers as they tracked Trumpeters that had been radioed in past years on the wintering grounds. Many thanks to Mike for his excellent monitoring, summarizing of data, and providing daily and weekly reports. Many folks also helped out by responding to calls about sick or dead swans in spread out locations. By the end of March, about 400 dead trumpeters had been documented. When possible, our team removed gizzards so that lead pellet numbers and characteristics can be documented.

While locations of lead "hotspots" were being narrowed down, more intense sampling of specific areas such as the U.S. side of Judson Lake was undertaken. This additional work will be funded by grants given to TTSS by Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation and the Foley-Frischkorn Foundation. The source of the lead shot that the birds are swallowing remains elusive, although the field work has narrowed the possibilities greatly. We are hopeful that the data gathered this winter will help pinpoint the source so that the birds can be kept away from it in the future.

Many individuals and families from the U. S. and Canada have made much appreciated donations to the Adopt-A Swan program. Visit the Adopt-A-Swan page of the TTSS Website to become part of this effort.

Our Washington Working Group also joined forces with WDFW, Washington State Audubon, and hunting organizations to sharply increase penalties for violations of existing nontoxic shot regulations in Washington State. Violations will now result in a mandatory \$1,000 fine and 2-year loss of bird hunting privileges. The newly passed legislation should send a strong message and make a significant difference in our "Get the Lead Out" campaign. It is hoped that increased penalties will make the environment much safer for all wildlife.

New challenge grant opportunity!!

The Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation has given TTSS a challenge grant of \$2,500 to help fund the essential field work to solve the lead poisoning problems in Washington State. We have pledged to raise \$5,000 (2:1) to match their grant and so far have raised \$3,500. Please help us meet our goal. All funds will go into the lead poisoning response project. Success at meeting the needed match will pay for additional crucial core sampling and help us compete for future funding for our projects.

News from Lakelse Lake, British Columbia – In February, TTSS member Judy Chrysler wrote that 187 Trumpeter Swans were counted on and around Lakelse Lake in Terrace, British Columbia, during the 26 December 2005 Christmas Bird Count. Lakelse Lake has remained open most of the winter with the swans feeding on the aquatic plant *Elodea* and grains offered by several lake residents. Judy made a donation to TTSS in memory of long-time lake resident Lloyd

Johnstone, who fed the flock of Trumpeters since the 1930's.

INTERIOR POPULATION NEWS

Ontario Trumpeter Swans – 2005 – Harry Lumsden reports that there were an estimated 523 Trumpeters in southern Ontario in 2005. The actual number is likely higher since many marked swans disappear in April to unknown breeding sites and later turn up with broods at traditional wintering locations. Twenty nine new swans were released in 2005 and 48 known nesting pairs attempted breeding. Thirty eight of these pairs were known to have raised 135 cygnets. Harry estimates there could have been at least 82 territorial pairs, making it possible that the Restoration's goal of 100 breeding pairs may be reached in 2006.

In 2005, there was evidence of breeding Trumpeter Swans from Minnesota and Michigan moving into Ontario. A brood was located by a Breeding Bird Atlas Team in the Kenora-Fort Frances area, on Little Sachigo Lake in western Ontario. This area is about 560 miles north of their probable wintering ground on the Otter Tail River, near Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County, Minnesota. Another brood was observed on a lake northeast of Dryden, north of International Falls, Minnesota. Restored Trumpeter Swans from Michigan also pioneered into the Sault Ste. Marie area where two trumpeter broods were observed in 2005.

Monticello, Minnesota swan viewing – TTSS member Sheila Lawrence again monitored the Trumpeter Swan flock this past winter on the Mississippi River in Wright County. Sheila estimated a peak of 1,400 swans in mid December. Temperatures warmed up to 40 degrees by late December and January was an exceptionally warm month in Minnesota, causing the numbers of swans to decline considerably as swans dispersed from Monticello. Even in northern Minnesota, many rivers and smaller creeks remained open during January and small flocks of swans were reported from northern areas. A number of visitors to the Monticello city swan viewing park left donations for feed along with notes of encouragement and thanks.

Other swan enthusiasts came from as far away as Texas to view and photograph the noisy flock! Visitors view the birds from an overlook and the feed is entirely paid for by private donations. Reports from the public and conservation officers to Three Rivers Park District seem to indicate that power line strikes and lead poisoning were the main sources of mortality among Trumpeters in east central Minnesota over the winter.

Wintering swans, Hudson, Wisconsin – TTSS member Barry Wallace wrote that at Thanksgiving he had made a high count of around 400 Trumpeter Swans on the St. Croix River at Hudson, Wisconsin. By December, the numbers of swans wintering on the St. Croix leveled off at about 200 birds. By mid March only a handful of last year's cygnets were still coming in. Lead poisoning, likely from ingestion of lead fishing sinkers, once again took a toll on several of the wintering birds. Most of the Trumpeters at this location have been marked by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Iowa hosts soirees with the swans - Over the past 2 winters, Iowa Department of Natural Resources staff hosted swan socials at two Trumpeter Swan wintering sites in Iowa. The first gathering this past winter was hosted with the Cass County Conservation Board in Cass County on December 30. About 80 swan watchers came out to enjoy the sights and sounds of swans. On 13 January, a second Swan Soiree was held at Beemer's Pond near Webster City, Hamilton County, where swan enthusiasts could stay out of the wind in a shed and sip hot apple cider while enjoying the birds. On both wintering locations, aerators keep the water open and corn is provided for the swans by local swan supporters.

Record number of Trumpeter Swans wintered in Arkansas - Various e-mail reports from birders over the winter months indicate that there were at least 110 Trumpeter Swans at Magness Lake, Heber Springs, Cleburne County, Arkansas, from November 2005 through February 2006. The record in Winter 2004/05 at Magness Lake was believed to be 88 trumpeters, so the wintering tradition at this location is steadily growing. Other sightings of one or two Trumpeters came from Newton County, near Jasper in the Buffalo National River Valley, Mammoth Spring State Park, in very northern Arkansas, and then in Pulaski County, south of Cleburne County. Arkansas Nongame Bird Program Leader Karen Rowe is looking at other potential wintering swan habitat and options for encouraging private landowners to plant winter forage for the swans. The first Trumpeter Swans came to winter in Heber Springs from Minnesota in the early 1990s.

Minnesota Waterfowl Symposium - The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association are sponsoring the 9th annual Waterfowl Symposium at the Maplelag Resort near Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, April 7-9, 2006. The conference will address the current status of waterfowl populations and species management problems, and many other waterfowl concerns, including the status of Trumpeter Swans in Minnesota and the Interior Population. For further symposium information contact Harvey Nelson, Symposium Coordinator, at 952-831-8333 or

harvnel@msn.com. You may also register for the conference on line at www.mnwaterfowl.com

OUR JANUARY TRIP TO VIEW SWANS IN ENGLAND

- Jim and Mary Lou King, Juneau, Alaska

We spent January 2006 in England where Gulf of Mexico water, wafted northeast by the Gulf Stream, keeps the grasses green and thrifty through the winter. The shores of the estuary here attract geese and swans that nest in Artic Siberia, northern Scandinavia, Spitsbergen, Iceland, Greenland, Canada's Queen Elizabeth Islands and other Artic Islands. Perhaps it was observation of the trans-Atlantic flight of these birds that encouraged the ancient Vikings to venture even further west across the North Atlantic?

We visited Slimbridge, England, headquarters of The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) that was founded 60 years ago in 1946 by artist and naturalist Sir Peter Scott. We watched over 400 wild Bewick's Swans arrive at a pond where Wildfowl Trust biologists distribute a wheel barrow of grain each winter evening at sunset. As the natural light fades, flood lights come on. All this activity is in front of a heated "hide" [blind] where 50 to 100 birdwatchers can rest their elbows on a window sill and see the comings and goings of the great birds without them being aware of the spectators. The atmosphere in the hide seemed to be one of reverence as people spoke in whispers, if they spoke at all, even though there was no chance of the swans hearing them.

We visited a second sanctuary of The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust at Welney where 1,700 wild Whooper Swans attend the evening feeding before an equally reverent audience. The bushel or so of feed is no where near sufficient to sustain these great flocks, but seem to transmit a sense of welcome to a place where it is safe to spend the night. During the day, in both cases, the swans range out to farmland to forage where there are sugar beet tops or sprouting winter wheat.

A gift store, tea shop and membership booth cater to the visitors the swans attract and, thus, the swans become self supporting.

Western Washington and Oregon have the same winter climate as southern England and we could develop facilities to make Alaska's wintering Trumpeter Swans equally self sufficient. Perhaps if The Trumpeter Swan Society could develop a swan hospitality center for wintering Trumpeters, we could measure our membership in thousands as the WWT does.

In any case, if you have the chance to visit England in January, you will find the bird life, with dozens of species besides swans, that congregate on the nine sanctuaries of The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (www.wwt.org.uk) or on the over 150 nature reserves of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (www.rspb.org.uk) very exhilarating.

IN MEMORIAM –

CLIFTON E. FRENCH, one of the Founders of TTSS and the first Superintendent of Three Rivers Park District died in January at his home in Sedona, Arizona. He was 87. “Our hearts are heavy with the loss of Superintendent French,” said James Deane, chairman of the Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners. “Clifton French was instrumental in the creation of a park system now enjoyed by millions of visitors each year. His legacy will live on forever in the beautiful places he worked so hard to preserve.”

In January 1962, French was appointed superintendent of the fledgling Hennepin County Park Reserve District, now known as Three Rivers Park District, and is credited with growing the Park District from 1,400 acres to more than 24,000 acres by his retirement in 1984.

Under his leadership, the Park District acquired the majority of its parks and opened three nature centers. French engaged in an active program of restoration of farmland to forests, marshes and prairie, making possible the return and perpetuation of native wildlife, and was a staunch advocate for the conservation of natural resources in a fast-growing metropolitan area.

During French’s tenure, the Park District adopted an 80/20 land-use policy for park reserve, in that 80 percent of the land was to be maintained in its natural state, while as much as 20 percent could be developed for recreational purposes compatible with the natural environment. The Trumpeter Swan Society office has been in Three Rivers Park District since the Society’s founding in 1968.

A celebration of French’s life is planned for April 14, 2005, at French Regional Park in Plymouth, Minnesota.

ART HAWKINGS - Retired U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist and long-time TTSS member Art Hawkins passed away earlier this month at the age of 92 at his home in Hugo, Minnesota. Art was a very well known pioneer in the world of waterfowl research and ecology and studied under the great Aldo Leopold at the University of Wisconsin. Art pioneered in the management of waterfowl studies and conservation, developing such methods as the waterfowl transect.

Art was one of the founders of the Wood Duck Society and remained extremely active in conservation issues until his death. Found beside his wildlife ponds in Hugo with his rubber boots on and field glasses around his neck, he had apparently been watching the ducks and geese return. Art left behind a wife of 64 years and a daughter who is working with the Aldo Leopold Foundation. The family has asked that memorials go to the Leopold Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, or to the Madison Audubon Society, Faville Prairie Restoration.

MORTALITY INFORMATION WANTED – Anne Oiler at the Brookfield Zoo, Brookfield, Illinois, is seeking references to the affects of *Microcystin sp.* or other cyanobacteria species on swan mortality. Any information would be appreciated. Please contact Anne by phone at 708-485-0263 ext. 473 or by e-mail at ANOILER@BrookfieldZoo.org

OUTBREAK OF AVIAN INFLUENZA AMONG MUTE SWANS REPORTED FROM ITALY – As reported on Atlanta’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, several Mute Swans were determined to have died of the H5N1 strain of the bird influenza virus in Italy in February 2006. A Reuters (Rome, Italy) news story dated 11 February 2006 also reported that the majority, but not all of 17 dead swans in southern Italy as well as three swans in Greece were diagnosed with the subtype or strain of avian flu H5N1. The Reuters story reported that a regional health official in the southern island of Sicily thought the swans were believed to have migrated from Russia. Avian flu is caused by avian influenza virus which occurs naturally in wild bird populations, including waterfowl. A total of 41 countries have reported H5N1, the virulent subtype of the avian influenza, outbreaks since 2004. Risk to human health has been linked to domestic poultry in Asia. In October 2005, The American Bird Conservancy developed a Position Statement on the role of wild birds in the spread of avian flu that may be read on the ABC’s website www.abcbirds.org. CDC’s website at www.cdc.gov and the US Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center site at www.nwhc.usgs.gov provide extensive resources and updates on the status of avian influenza.

SWAN COUNTS IN THE COMOX VALLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA - Volunteers from the Comox Valley Naturalists Society conduct swan counts every Tuesday morning from the end of October through the end of March. On Vancouver Island, the Comox Valley supports a large wintering population of swans, mostly Trumpeter Swans. On 15 February 2005, the volunteers counted 2,360 Trumpeter Swans. One of the best places to view swans during the winter is the former Farquharson farm, now called Comox Bay Farm that was purchased in 1998 by the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program, a partnership of government and nongovernment agencies to protect key waterfowl habitat. Historically, wintering swans migrated to feed in the area’s rich tidal marshes and wetlands. However, as the wetlands were lost or degraded, the birds adapted to feeding in agricultural fields. To learn more about concerns of swans and agriculture in south coastal British Columbia, visit Environment Canada at www.ecoinfo.org/env_ind/region/swan/swan_e.cfm

THANK YOU TO MEMBERS FOR ANNUAL APPEAL CONTRIBUTIONS – Generous donations above and beyond the annual membership dues are gratefully acknowledged from the following TTSS members:

Joyce M. Anderson
 Lawrence J. Blus
 John Burchard
 Judy Chrysler & Kelly Kline (in memory of Lloyd Johnstone)
 Laurie Degernes, DVM
 Nancy & Peter Dyson
 Fred Engelman, Jr.
 Lisa & Bob Erickson
 Lillian Franklin in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Johnson
 Arnie Fredrickson
 Ronald R. Funes
 Dorothy C. Gillette
 Laurence N. Gillette
 Daniel & Rosa Gomez
 Dr. Shelly Sampson Gordon
 Dr. Alwin C. Green
 David C. Grimwood
 Carole & Norman Hofley
 Martha Johnson
 Brenda and Larry Kitchen

Kittitas Audubon Society
 Kari Koehler & Tobin Sobaski
 Sheila J. Lawrence
 June D. & Donald L. Lord, Jr.
 Harry G. Lumsden
 Sue Madison
 Carl D. Mitchell
 Peter Morrison
 Joan Parsons & Ed Anderson
 Pheasant Farms, LLC
 Maxine Phillips
 Nathaniel P. Reed
 George T. Richardson
 Burton W. Rounds
 Janice Sampson
 Carl R. Schilt
 Larry & Arleen Schinke
 Joan M. Schwindt
 Jim and Sally Shanks
 Ruth Shea & Rod Drewien
 James H. Snowden
 Scott & Cindy Snyder

Lynn M. Spicer-Tucker
 Gayle Stebbings
 Dr. Bill Sladen, Swan Research Program
 William R. Uhl
 Sonny Wainwright
 David & Kitty Weaver
 Jan Westwater
 Marian White

ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF SWANS IN THE YUKON

- The annual celebration of the swans returning to the Yukon Territory will once again be hosted at the Swan Haven Interpretation Centre on the shores of M'Clintock Bay. This is the Yukon's premiere birding festival, welcoming spring to the north country and will take place this year 15-23rd April. The 2006 Calendar of events will be posted soon on the Wildlife Viewing website. In the past, as many as 2,600 swans have been counted at Swan Haven as they stop to feed on the rich vegetation in the bay, typically during the 3rd week of April. Our TTSS Website has a link to the Yukon Wildlife Viewing Program.



Newly hatched cygnets, Three Rivers Park District, Minnesota, June 2005

GRANDE PRAIRIE SWAN FESTIVAL - The 8th annual swan festival will kick off on Saturday April 22 at Centre 2000 in Grande Prairie, Alberta, sponsored by the Friends of Saskatoon Island National Park. Visit the TTSS website and click on the Festival link or contact Margot Hervieux at Margot.Hervieux@gov.ab.ca or at 780-538-5603 for more details. Festival events and bus tours will take place April 22 and the 23rd to welcome back the swans to the Peace Country.



The same cygnets, September 2005
 Photos by Arnie Fredrickson

WANT TO BE A MEMBER? NEED TO RENEW? GIVE A FRIEND A GIFT?

Student/Retired __\$15 Regular __\$25 Family __\$30 Organization __\$50 Supporting __\$100 Life Member __\$500 [to Endowment Fund]

Make check/money order payable to TTSS (Canadians please write "in US funds" on personal checks). Mail to:
 The Trumpeter Swan Society, 12615 County Road 9 Suite 100, Plymouth, Minnesota 55441

Name _____ Address _____

The Trumpeter Swan Society
12615 County Road 9 – Suite 100
Plymouth, MN 55441-1248

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 25
Maple Plain, MN

Return service requested

Directors

Ron Andrews
Clear Lake, IA

Dale Becker
President
Pablo, MT

Laurence N. Gillette
Maple Plain, MN

James Hawkings
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

Gary Ivey
Vice-President
Corvallis, OR

W. C. Joe Johnson
Augusta, MI

Martha Jordan
Everett, WA

James G. King
Juneau, AK

Harry G. Lumsden
Aurora, Ontario

Sumner Matteson
Madison, WI

Harvey K. Nelson
Bloomington, MN

Sally Shanks
Past President
Walnut Grove, CA

William Whitman
Milford, DE

Rick McKelvey
Director-At-Large

Bettina Sparrowe
Director-At-Large

Ruth E. Shea
Executive Director

Affiliate Directory

Joyce Anderson
Bigelow, MN

Paul & Diane Anderson
Seattle, WA

Diane Birdsall
Jackson, WY

Richard Brown
Bainbridge Island, WA

Earth Friends Wildlife
Foundation
Jackson, WY

Daniel & Rosa Gomez
Calipatria, CA

Karen Harris
Tulsa, OK

Jerry Haynes
Ferndale, WA

Dennis & Marise Hussey
Mathews, NC

Iowa Department of Natural
Resources
Clear Lake, Iowa

Joe Johnson
Augusta, MI

Ross Johnson
Eau Claire, WI

Rodney King
Vallejo, CA

Kari Koehler & Tobin Sobaski
Woodbury, MN

Harvey K. & Gene M. Nelson
Bloomington, MN

Paula & Arthur Neumann
Eckert, CO

Richard W. Perkins
Long Lake, MN

David & Virginia Ridgway
Olga, WA

Ed Riedel
Littlerock, CA

Bob Ritchie
Fairbanks, AK

Burton W. Rounds
Duluth, MN

Eugene D. Stroops
Cameron, MT

Swan Research Program
Warrenton, VA

Three Rivers Park District
Plymouth, MN

S. M. Unfried
Wilson, WY

[Editor's Note: Any persons or organizations paying \$100 or more per year for membership will be an Affiliate, excepting life memberships which are paid only once.]

TRUMPETINGS EDITORS

Madeleine Linck
Ruth E. Shea

New Members

James R. Demro
Marengo, IA

Katherine Dhuey
Berkeley, CA

Bobbi Foltz
Camano Island, WA

Lillian Franklin
Hattieville, AR

Scott Lusk
Fairfax, VA

Michael Overs
Toronto, Ontario

Harmut Rosen
Strausberg, Germany

Raymond St. Ores
Hudson, WI

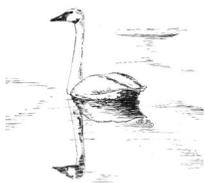
Nancy VanDenberg
Coon Rapids, MN

Edith Walden
Seattle, WA

Chris Wilson
Otsego, MN

Christy Wujcik
Sedro-Woolley, WA

WELCOME ALL!



BACK ISSUES OF PROCEEDINGS AND NEWSLETTERS – Due to the TTSS office's recent move to a location with less storage space, we have some back issues of Conference *Proceedings* (6th - 17th and the 19th) available at the discount price of \$5 (US) each. Price includes postage.

Visit TTSS' World Wide Web site at www.trumpeterswansociety.org