

Protect Our Largest Migratory Bird
Ed + A.

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Picture to yourself a small family of great white birds -- the largest migratory species in the country -- trying to carry on like refugees of a stricken race on a hidden lake in the depths of a wooded region. It is a beautiful home site surrounded by wet mountain meadows, eternal quiet except for the talkings of the birds, the occasional chatter of a squirrel, or the windy creakings of a tall tree leaning against another. And the two big trumpeter swans (*Olor buccinator*) are quiet, too, because of twin half-grown cygnets swimming about and feeding all unknowing of the dangers that may come into their lives later on.

Exterminated by gun-fire! This at least was the consensus of opinion years ago by those who watched the great white flocks diminish to a dangerous remnant. We know that trumpeter was the bird of the wide interior, ranging between Hudson Bay and the Rocky Mts., and breeding chiefly in a northern range. Further south, the breeding of this bird was more or less desultory, but there were records from Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. It was formerly abundant along the Columbia River. The bird was slaughtered in immense numbers by hunters of the Hudson Bay Company, and the slaughter stopped only when the species ceased to be productive.

But where there is life, there is hope. And so it has come about with rigid protection and watchfulness, along with an awakened moral conscience, that the trumpeter is at least holding his own in the United States. At least two hundred and eleven of these birds are found today on Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Montana, Yellowstone Park, and the surrounding areas. Last year one hundred and ninety of the birds were reported. In 1934 there were only thirty-three known trumpeters in the country.

This swan no longer takes long migrations as in its early history. The late Joseph Grinnell stated that the trumpeter was once a regular spring visitant to the fresh water ponds and lakes in the vicinity of Los Angeles, California. Its recent movements have been confined mostly between Yellowstone and Red Rock Lakes. This takes in local migrations which during the winter months may take the birds a distance of as much as three hundred miles from their summer feeding and nesting areas.

Mr. David D. Condon, Assistant Yellowstone Park Naturalist, who is probably closer to the intimate life of this bird and knows more about him than anyone else, has given us some first-hand information. On April 17, 1937, he saw five trumpeters that had

from their habit of feeding deep on the water bottoms of former shooting grounds where they pick up shot mistaken for gravel.) In 1940 ^{last year} it is known that seven swan were killed on Henry's Fork of the Snake River, two in Swan Valley, and three on Mud Lake west of St. Anthony, Idaho. (Because of confusion of hunters in distinguishing between trumpeters, whistlers, and white geese, in Idaho all hunting privileges for all three birds have been taken off.) The trumpeter and whistling swans are almost identical except for size, wing spread, and one or two minute markings. The whistler is four and half feet in length with a wing spread of seven feet, and has ^a ~~the~~ distinguishing yellow ~~yellow~~ spot on the black lores which the trumpeter lacks. The trumpeter is five and a half feet in length with a wing spread of sometimes more than eight feet. The nesting habits are the same. The nest is made of coarse grass, leaves and feathers, with five to seven dull whitish eggs, placed on the ground, preferably on an island out in deep water for protection from enemies. One writer has described the calls of the two swans in this fashion. "The trumpeter blows an authentic stertorous trombone, while the whistler's instrument is a high-pitched toy trumpet in comparison."

M.L. 2. 7. 8. 7. 2. A.
Sept. 22

Our Largest Migratory Waterfowl, (?)
~~SWAN SONG OF THE SWANS~~ (?)

Picture to yourself a small family of great white birds -- the largest migratory species of the country -- trying to carry on like refugees of a stricken race on a hidden lake in the depths of a wooded region. It is a beautiful home site surrounded by wet mountain meadows, eternal quiet except for the talkings of the birds, the chatter of a squirrel, or the windy creakings of a tall tree leaning against another. And the two big trumpeter swans (*Olor buccinator*) ~~parents~~ ^{twin} are quiet, too, because the two half-grown cygnets swim about and feed all unknowing of the dangers that may come into their lives later on.

Exterminated by gun-fire! This at least ^{was} ~~seems to be~~ the consensus of opinion years ago by those who watched the great white flocks diminish to a dangerous remnant. We know that trumpeter was the bird of the wide interior, ranging between Hudson Bay and the Rocky Mts., and breeding chiefly in a northern range. (~~He was~~ ^{slaughtered in immense numbers by the hunters of the Hudson Bay Company, and the slaughter stopped only when the species ceased to be productive.}) Further south, the breeding

of this bird was more or less desultory, but there were records from Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Idaho, and probably Washington. ^{the bird} ~~He~~ was slaughtered in immense numbers by the hunters of the Hudson Bay Company, and the slaughter stopped only when the species ceased to be productive.

But where there is life, there is hope. And so it has come about with rigid protection and watchfulness, along with an awakened moral ^{conscience?} ~~conscience~~, that the trumpeter is at least holding his own in the United States. At least two hundred and eleven of these huge birds are found ^{today} on Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Montana, Yellowstone National Park, and the surrounding area. Last year one hundred and ninety of the birds were reported. In 1934 there were only thirty-three known ^{trumpeters} birds in the country.

This swan no longer takes long migrations as in its early history, and its recent movements have been confined between the Park and the Red Rock Lakes Refuge. This takes in local migrations which during the winter months may take the birds a distance of as much as three hundred miles from their summer feeding and nesting areas. Mr. David D. Condon, Assistant Yellowstone Park Naturalist, who is probably closer to the intimate life of this bird and knows more about him than anyone else,

has given us some first-hand information. On April 17, 1937, he saw five trumpeters ^{that had wandered down} to a slough of Marsh Creek which is a tributary of the Portneuf River thirty miles south of Pocatello, Idaho. The day after, while crossing from Lorenzo, Idaho, to Roberts, he watched a pair of trumpeters for some time on an ox bow lake in the Snake River bottoms.

The swan ^{travel} migrate from their wintering grounds in the early spring back to the areas where they are apt to nest for the coming season, and in many instances arrive before the ice has left the lakes. Observations show that ^{some of them} they stay around open water spaces close to the lakes where they plan to nest for the season and move in as early as possible in the spring.

The swan sometimes move in mid-nesting season from one lake to another. In one case this occurred because in early August their lake was taken over by a family of otters, two adults and three young. Soon after this the swan tired of the otters' companionship and moved to an area where such undesired associations were not so numerous. These birds were distinctively marked by having rusty heads and necks, the only ones so observed. Another pair of birds established their nest on the Crescent Hill Beaver Ponds in the Park, and after twenty days of incubation it was destroyed by a black bear on June 5. The swan left the vicinity.

With the approach of fall, there is a local migration of non-nesting trumpeters from their summering places to the shallower water regions of Lake Yellowstone. The first birds usually arrive there about Sept. 1, and from then on there is an ever increasing number as the fall progresses. Most nesting families are in flight and ready for the fall migration by October 1. In Idaho trumpeters utilize the sloughs of the Snake River Valley, Teton Basin, Henry's Fork, Buffalo Park, Warm River, and other tributaries of the Snake River as wintering places. In 1940 a pair of swan was reported killed in this region by poachers.

There is a definite mortality among the swan due to the shooting by hunters during the open season on waterfowl as is evidenced by the arrest and conviction of hunters in Idaho and Montana for killing them. Swan also die of lead poisoning from their habit of feeding on water bottoms where they pick up [?] lead bullets. Undoubtedly many are shot or wounded that no one knows about, for they are either left where killed or if wounded they fly off to die in some out-of-the-way place and are not

found. In 1940 it is known that seven were killed on Henry's Fork of the Snake River, two killed in Swan Valley, and three on Mud Lake west of St. Anthony, Idaho.

And so, Olor buccinator, your life still hangs in the balance in spite of your effort ^{survive} plucky ~~perseverance~~ to live. May you persevere and come out triumphant, for who ^{the} would not stand awed to listen to ~~your~~ deep, throaty calls from your regal throat?

Because of confusion of hunters in distinguishing between trumpeters, whistler swans, & white geese, hunting privileges on all three have been taken off in order to save the swans.

Trumpeter Swan Report by David D. Condon, Park Naturalist

This report is based on field observations made in Yellowstone Park from July 1939 to end of March 1941, on the trumpeter swan (*Cygnus buccinator*).

Observations show that there are pronounced local migrations by the trumpeter swan. These during the winter months may take the birds a distance of as much as 300 miles from their summer feeding and nesting areas. On April 17, 1937, I saw five swan on a slough on Marsh Creek which is a tributary to the Portneuf River thirty miles south of Pocatello, Idaho, which after careful examination proved to be trumpeter swan. On April 18, 1937, while crossing from Lorenzo, Idaho, to Roberts, Idaho, a pair of trumpeter swan were watched for some time on an oxbow lake in the Snake River bottoms near Roberts.

Trumpeter swan migrate from their wintering grounds in the early spring to the areas where they are apt to nest for the coming season, and in many instances arrive before the ice has left the lakes on which nesting may occur. On March 15, when leaving for their annual leave by West Yellowstone, a pair of trumpeters were observed on Nymph Lake. On returning from leave on April 6, probably the same pair was observed on the beaver ponds in Willow Park. It is believed this is the same pair that nested on Swan Lake in 1939.

Observations show that the trumpeter swan utilize open water areas in close proximity to the lakes upon which they plan to nest for the season, while they wait for these lakes to open and become available, and that they move into the areas where nesting may occur as soon as possible in the early spring.

Many trumpeters winter on the larger open water areas of the Park such as the outlet of Yellowstone Lake, west end of Shoshone Lake, at the mouth of Shoshone Creek, Heart Lake at the mouth of Witch Creek, Yellowstone River near Mud Volcano, the Madison River, and other open waters. From these areas as spring approaches, they make frequent flights to the lakes and ponds where they plan to summer.

Trumpeter swan sometimes move in mid nesting season from one lake to another. In one case this occurred because in early August because their lake was taken over by a family of two adults and three young otter. Soon after this the swan tired of the otters' companionship and moved to an area where such undesired associates were not so numerous. These birds were distinctively marked by having rusty heads and necks and it was possible to identify them as the pair that was seen for the first time

on Concretion Cove behind Storm Point on August 12th. Of all the trumpeter swan observed during the season this characteristic was observed in this one pair only. A pair of swans established their nest on the Crescent Hill Beaver Ponds and after 20 days of incubation it was destroyed by a black bear on June 5, 1940. The swan left the vicinity.

With the approach of fall, there is a local migration of non-nesting trumpeters from their summering areas to the shallower water regions of Lake Yellowstone and the Yellowstone River between Lake and Canyon. The first swan usually arrive there about Sept. 1, and by the 15th as many as seven have been seen, with an ever increasing number as the fall progresses. Most nesting families are in flight and ready for the fall migration by October 1. There is a definite concentration of swans along the Yellowstone River between Lake and Canyon in these open waters which are heavily utilized by large numbers of swan from Sept. 1 to January and perhaps on into February, with a decrease of numbers elsewhere in the Park. In Idaho trumpeters utilize the sloughs of the Snake River Valley, Teton Basin, and Henry's Fork, Buffalo Park, Warm River and other tributaries of the Snake River as wintering areas. Mr. George Marler of Thornton, Idaho, reports that a pair of swan on Mud Lake were killed in 1940.

Records available on the nesting of trumpeters in Yellowstone for the past ten years show that that there were in use by nesting pairs four lakes in 1931, 11 in 1936, and 13 in 1939. The record for 1940 was incomplete. For the ten year period 1931 through 1940, the record available on these swan nesting activities show that during this time an accumulated total of 69 pairs have attempted or have been successful in nesting in Yellowstone. These 69 pairs have been able to rear a total of 123 cygnets to at least eight weeks of age.

That there is a definite mortality among the swan due to shooting by hunters during the open season on waterfowl is evidenced not only by the above incident (lead poisoning of injured birds from shooting- Murie and Oberhansley), but by the arrest and conviction of hunters in Idaho and Montana for killing trumpeter swan. Many instances of this type have come to light and undoubtedly many are shot that no one knows about for the swan are either left where they are killed or being wounded,

Journal

5th June 1911

Rudolph
Rudolph 2nd Park

Romberg - Pillbox

Shapton Farm

Rudolph 1st Park

See Laminic Hills

Wet to leave
Swan