

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Biological Survey

DIVISION OF INFORMATION

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Photographs Available

Trumpeter Swan Inventory  
Reports 200 Birds in United States

The Bureau of Biological Survey today reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes that there are now at least 199 trumpeter swans in the United States, an increase of 51 since August 1938. All the birds are concentrated on the Red Rocks Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Lakeview, Montana, and in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, some 30 miles east.

A Biological Survey report of a systematic count made early this month by employees of the Survey and the National Park Service shows that the trumpeter, the largest American waterfowl, is holding its own and is not nearly so likely to be wiped out as it was 25 years ago, it was reported to Secretary Ickes.

Of the 199 trumpeters observed, 123 were adults and 76 cygnets. The birds were distributed as follows: On Red Rocks Refuge, 109; on adjacent lakes, 20; and in Yellowstone Park, 70.

The count is conservative, according to the report, since three pairs of swans showed signs indicating they had cygnets, but observers could not get close enough to the trumpeters to see the young in the heavy grass. The average number of young was five, though one pair was seen with eight cygnets.

Annual counts in other years were as follows: In 1936, 74 adults and 41 cygnets; 1937, 81 adults and 77 cygnets; and 1938, 93 adults and 55 cygnets.

Observers were elated because there are 21 more cygnets this year than in 1938, and the adult count is 30 more than in any previous year. In an optimistic tone the report concludes that "with an increase in adults, we can look forward to more cygnets from year to year, provided we can retain the adults".

The trumpeter swan faced extinction in the United States in the early part of this century. Early destruction of the species, the report explains, resulted primarily from the heavy trading in the bird's down and breast skin.

Later the trumpeter population was further depleted by the advance of civilization. The breeding grounds of the swans were taken over for farms and ranches.

The number of trumpeters had fallen so low by 1907 that many people seriously believed the bird was extinct. Then a small flock was discovered in the Red Rocks Lakes and Yellowstone Park region.

In 1935, the Red Rocks Lake Refuge was established. Today vegetation on the sanctuary is not cut for hay or grazed by livestock. In part, this explains the return of the trumpeter, the report asserts. Native cover has come back rapidly, and the birds are living in a better environment than they did a few years ago.

Much remains to be learned regarding the life history of the birds, but studies in that direction are now being made. Sixty-two artificial nests were constructed on the sanctuary to aid the trumpeters during the breeding season although the success of these nests cannot be determined for at least 3 years, the report states.