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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Immediate Release

TRUMPETER SWAN RANKS CONTINUE TO GROW

The rare trumpeter swans, once threatened with extinction in this country, now show a United States population of 577 birds according to an announcement today by Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay.

A preliminary census taken recently by Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service personnel revealed an increase of six "trumpeters" over last year's count of 571.

All United States areas where these graceful white birds with the melodious call are known to exist were covered in the census. A breakdown of the count, by States follows:

In Montana, 410 trumpeter swans were counted. The Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge accounted for 249 of these, while 161 trumpeters were tallied in the surrounding non-Refuge area.

The Wyoming census revealed a total of 68 swans in that State, exclusive of those observed in the country surrounding Yellowstone National Park. Sixty-one were observed in Yellowstone and seven on the National Elk Refuge.

The total count for Idaho, excluding the swans in the environs of Yellowstone Park, was 34 birds.

A special census of trumpeters inhabiting the Wyoming and Idaho areas just outside Yellowstone revealed a total of 57 swans.

A census of experimental areas in Nevada and Oregon, where trumpeters had been transferred in an attempt to establish new breeding colonies, revealed a total of eight swans.

This year's census, as in previous years, was conducted at the conclusion of the breeding season in order that newcomers to the trumpeter ranks might be included in the count.

Abundant in this country during the last century, the trumpeter swans dwindled in numbers to such an extent that the bird became known as one of America's vanishing species. Since the average trumpeter weighs 30 pounds, has a wingspread of eight feet, and flies close to the ground, the swans made an easy target for gunners. Heavy trading in the birds' down and breast skin continued to thin the trumpeter ranks. Destruction of the swans' breeding grounds by farm and ranch interests added to the depletion of the birds' numbers and in the early 1900's the species was believed actually to be extinct.

In 1907, when small flocks of the swans were discovered at Red Rock Lakes and at Yellowstone Park, restoration efforts were begun by the Federal Government. Protection of the birds by law, whereby the taking of trumpeters or their eggs was banned, became effective in 1924. In 1935 the Red Rock Lakes Refuge was established by the Bureau of Biological Survey, predecessor of the Fish and Wildlife Service, primarily to assure the perpetuation of this species. Subsequently the Service transplanted a few swans to its Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon and to its Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada for the purpose of starting new nesting colonies.

The gradual spread of the trumpeter swan nesting territory beyond the limited range in the Red Rock Lakes-Yellowstone Park area is a tribute to the conservation officials and citizens of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho who have joined forces with the Fish and Wildlife Service in protecting the trumpeters.

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