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## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### TRUMPETER SWAN POPULATION SHOWS DECREASE IN 1955

The United States population of trumpeter swans is down to 590 birds this year, a drop of 52 below last year's total of 642, according to an announcement made today by Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay.

This total includes 495 adult birds and 95 cygnets, or young swans. In 1935, there were only 73 of the swans, by actual count.

The 10th annual aerial census of these swans was made on August 29, 30 and 31 by personnel of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. During this time all areas where these graceful white birds with the melodious call are known to exist in this country were covered. A breakdown of the count, by States, follows:

In Montana, 415 trumpeters were observed. The Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, in southwestern Montana, accounted for 283 of these, while 132 swans were tallied in the surrounding nonrefuge area.

The Wyoming census revealed a total of 132 swans in that State. Ninety-seven of these birds were found on Federal areas: 68 in Yellowstone National Park, 15 in Grand Teton National Park, and 14 in the National Elk Refuge. On areas outside the Federal sanctuaries, 35 trumpeters were observed.

The total count for Idaho was 40 birds. Twelve of these were counted on the areas adjacent to the Yellowstone and Grand Teton Parks; 28 were located in the Island Park area.

Three additional birds were reported during the census period from Oregon and Nevada.

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

Several hundred other trumpeter swans are known to exist in Canada, in British Columbia and western Alberta. This group is widely separated in range from the birds in the United States. Another group has been reported in recent years from southern Alaska. This is thought to be a segment of the Canadian population.

Abundant all over the West and Midwest 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 so that in the early 1900's the species was believed actually to be extinct.

In 1907, when small flocks of the swans were discovered in Montana 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 Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, now administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service, was established primarily to assure the perpetuation of this species. Nearly 7,000 feet above sea level, the refuge lies at the eastern end of Centennial Valley in Beaverhead County, just west of Yellowstone National Park.

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