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AERIAL SURVEY SHOWS TRUMPETER SWAN POPULATION HOLDING STEADY

In 1956--a year of many developments for the trumpeter swan--the American flock of these birds maintained its population level, the 11th annual aerial survey showing 588 birds as compared with 590 last year, John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, reported today.

The other trumpeter swan developments during the year include:

Definite evidence of an interchange of birds between the American flock which occupies the area where Montana, Idaho and Wyoming meet and the Canadian flock which ranges some 800 or 900 miles to the northward;

Discovery that a third flock of trumpeters lives in the Copper River country of Alaska;

Proof, as a result of fluoroscopic studies of 100 birds on Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Montana, that the trumpeter is subject to hunting pressure, despite the fact that it is on the protected list.

The aerial survey, carried on cooperatively by personnel of the National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, showed that the bulk of the trumpeters, 422 of them, were in Montana and of these there were 332 on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge. An even 100 trumpeters were spotted in Wyoming, with 57 of them in Yellowstone Park and 18 on the Wyoming portion of the Targhee National Forest. In Idaho, 40 were counted, 17 of them on the Idaho section of the Targhee. On Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon were 22 trumpeter swans which the Fish and Wildlife Service had transplanted there in an effort to develop a new nesting flock; on Ruby Lake Refuge in Nevada were four other transplants.

Grouping the data another way shows that 364 of the trumpeters were on National Wildlife Refuges, 73 in National Parks, 41 on National Forests and 110 on lands having a varied ownership pattern, such as State, private or Federal lands other than forests, parks, or refuges.

The census revealed a total of 81 cygnets of young trumpeters. This is normal. In the last five years the number of cygnets fluctuated from a low of 75 to a top of 100.

The trumpeter weighs about 30 pounds and has an eight-foot wingspread. At one time it occupied the western part of the United States by the thousands, but unrestricted hunting practically eliminated the species. In fact, in 1900 the species was considered extinct. However, in 1907, a few small groups of trumpeters were found in the Red Rock Lakes area. They were immediately placed under Federal protection. In 1935, Red Rock Lakes Migratory Waterfowl Refuge was created by Congress primarily as a home for the trumpeter. Although once believed to have had a wide migration pattern, present studies indicate few now migrate beyond 100 miles of their place of birth.

While the bird is inclined to congregate, breeding pairs definitely require seclusion during the nesting season. They usually need about a square mile of land and water for "territory" during that period.

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